

*THE ART CIRCLE:*

*A Theory of Art*

*George Dickie*

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George Dickie

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## PREFACE

In Chapters I and VII of *Art and the Aesthetic* I advanced what I called "the institutional theory of art." In spite of its curious name, the theory attracted a great deal of attention—attention sufficient after a short time to leave the institutional theory a thing of shreds and pieces. *The Art Circle* is my attempt to pick up the pieces, rework them, and put them back together.

A great many people read all or part of the manuscript of this book at various stages of its development and gave me their comments. I thank them for their help.

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## *Chapter I Introduction*

### *Part I The Philosophy of Art*

Philosophizing about the nature of art begins, as so much in philosophy does, with Plato. Theorizing about art was never a primary concern for Plato but something done as a means to a larger and for him more important end. In *The Republic*, for example, Plato finds it necessary to say a little about art because he thinks art has dangerous effects on people, and he is there concerned with the organization of people in an ideal society. For the most part, philosophers until fairly recently have followed Plato's lead and have not made the philosophy of art the center of their attention. Both what little Plato did say about art and the philosophical method he used have had, however, long-lasting effects on philosophical thinking about art.

What Plato said about art is that it is imitation. This claim cannot be a definition of "art," since if it is treated as a definition, it identifies art with imitation, but not every imitation is art. Plato's claim is at best a partial definition, that is, a contention that imitation is a necessary condition of being art. If Plato had had a primary theoretical interest in art, perhaps he would have attempted to specify

a second condition or a set of further conditions which would distinguish those imitations which are art from those which are not. If he had made this specification, then we would have a Platonic theory of art.

What Plato was interested in doing in *The Republic* was to show how the nature of art justifies his severe attitude toward it and the strict controls he wanted to place on it. That a work of art is an imitation is, Plato claims, a kind of defect. A painting of a chair is less real than the chair it is a painting of, since it is at one remove from the chair. Furthermore, according to Plato, a chair is an object in the world of sense and undergoes constant change. The chair's Form, by contrast, is an object in the ideal realm and is eternal and unchanging. For Plato, a chair is thus less real than its Form. Plato speaks of physical objects (chairs and tables) as being *imitations* of the nonspatial, nontemporal Forms (Chairness and Tableness). Consequently, a painting of a chair or of anything else is twice removed from Platonic reality—the world of Forms; a painting is thus doubly defective. What Plato could have noted but did not is that works of art, like everything else in the world of sense, are directly related to the Forms. A work of art has to “imitate” the Form of Art and the Form of Imitation, since it is an instance of both art and imitation. Even if, however, a work of art has this more direct relation to the Forms (given Plato's theory), it would still have the more circuitous route to the Forms through what it represents in the world of sense. Plato, determined to find fault with art, would still no doubt regard the circuitous route through the world of sense as a defect for art. In addition to this metaphysical defect, there is another problem with art for Plato; he held that the creation and transmission of art inherently involves emotion and that this involvement produces dangerous effects in spectators. Plato has, therefore, two reasons to justify his severe attitude toward art and his advocacy of stringent controls for it.

The authority of Plato fixed the imitation theory of art in the minds of almost everyone as the correct account for more than 2000 years, or perhaps it was just the lack of interest in the philosophy of art that allowed such a clearly inadequate account to become the received view of the nature of art. The imitation theory of art, with all of its inadequacies as a theory, has then been around influencing thinking about art for a very long time. Even so, it is not clear that any philosopher has really held the imitation theory of art in a completely conscious way. The imitation theory of art has for a long time been “in the air” without being examined, defended, or even seriously thought about.

Plato's way of philosophizing about art (and other things) has had an even more pervasive and long-lasting influence than his view that art is imitation. Plato's way of drawing philosophical conclusions

has as its basis insight into the nature of the Forms. This insight takes two forms: a complete insight and an incomplete insight. Incomplete insight occurs when someone has sufficient insight into the nature of a Form to know that a proposed definition is inadequate. For example, the ability to see that a proposed definition of "justice" is faulty presupposes some insight into the nature of the Form of Justice, although not necessarily enough insight to give a correct definition of "justice." The ability to see that a counterexample to a definition is a counterexample and that, therefore, the definition is inadequate also involves at least this partial insight. Complete insight occurs when someone has sufficient insight into the nature of a Form to know that a proposed definition is adequate. For example, the ability to see that a proposed definition of "justice" is correct presupposes complete insight into the nature of the Form of Justice. What Plato's method supposedly yields when complete insight is achieved is knowledge of the real essence of a thing. Such knowledge, for example, presumes to be the foundation for Plato's account of a just society in *The Republic*.

Plato's method of seeking definitions which reveal essences by means of philosophical reflection became the method of many philosophers. When finally in the nineteenth century some philosophers began seriously to think about the nature of art, they did so by seeking a definition which catches the essence of art by means of philosophical reflection. The first theory to challenge the imitation theory was the expression theory of art. It is ironic that one of the things which Plato alleged to be an invariant feature of art and regarded as socially dangerous—its inherent connection with emotion—was seized upon by the expressionists as the essence of art. These nineteenth-century theorists held that the expression of emotion is the essence of art. Whether the expressionist theories succeed better than the imitation theory is not something with which I will concern myself here. I am here concerned with the persistence of a method. Once the hold of the imitation theory was broken in the nineteenth century, innumerable theories of the essence of art were brought forth. What seems to have happened when philosophers of art sought the essence of art is that they have simply taken a feature of art which was prominent or had seized the imagination at a particular historical time to be the essence of art. Thus have transient features of art been frozen into definitions and passed off as essences.

It is the discovery-of-the-essence-of-art-by-reflection method that first Paul Ziff and later Morris Weitz attacked in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> They both urge us to look at the usages of the expressions "art" and "work of art" and to draw our conclusions about the definability of "art" or "work of art" on the basis of these linguistic data. The conclusions they draw are that there is no essence of art and, therefore, that no



definition of the traditional kind can be given of "art." As part of their conclusion they agree that there is no one condition or set of conditions which is necessary for something's being art; there is no essence which runs through every work of art.

The Ziff/Weitz challenge to the Platonic method of the earlier theorizing about art is important and enlightening. Their conclusions, however, that there is no necessary condition of art and, consequently, that there can be no definition of "art" in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions requires careful scrutiny. There may not be any Platonic essence which fixes and defines "art" and which can be discovered by philosophical reflection or intuition, but this does not mean that we cannot discover necessary and sufficient conditions of art by a careful attention to those human activities which are the arts. The institutional theory is an attempt to state such conditions for art.

The traditional theories of art are overly simple and too narrowly focused. The imitation theory focuses simply on subject matter, although it clearly implies a creator of the art. The expression theory is artist-centered. The imitation theory places the work of art within a two-place network between artist and subject matter. The expression theory places the work of art in a one-place relation to an artist. Subsequent theories of art place the work of art in similar simple networks of relations. The institutional theory attempts to place the work of art within a multi-placed network of much greater complexity than anything envisaged by the earlier theories. I turn now to a preliminary discussion of the institutional theory.

## *Part II The Institutional Theory of Art*

The version of the institutional theory of art which was worked out over a period of years and which was set forth most fully in Chapters I and VII of *Art and the Aesthetic* I now regard as mistaken in a great many of its details. I believe, however, that the institutional approach to the understanding of art is a viable one. By an institutional approach I mean the idea that works of art are art as a result of the position they occupy within an institutional framework or context. The institutional theory is, then, a kind of *contextual* theory. All, or almost all, of the traditional theories of art are, I shall suggest in Chapter IV, contextual theories of one kind or another. A pervasive difficulty of the traditional theories is that the contexts they imply are too "thin" to be sufficient. In this book I attempt to present a revised version of the institutional theory in which the defects of the earlier version are corrected and which provides a context "thick" enough to do the job. I realize the virtual impossibility of *proving* a positive philosophical thesis which is worked out in any detail at all. Still, I hope that the arguments and insights advanced in the book give enough support to make the institutional theory plausible enough to be taken seriously.

My realization of the need for revising the theory is largely the result of objections raised by its critics. The bulk of the changes are the result of consciously taking account of the criticisms of Monroe Beardsley, Timothy Binkley, Ted Cohen, James Fletcher, Peter Kivy, Colin Lyas, Robert Schultz, Kendall Walton and Jeffrey Wieand. Some of the changes are without doubt the result of the remarks of critics I have taken account of in a less conscious way. I am grateful to all of these critics.

Before indicating in a general way what the changes in the theory are to be, it will be useful first to have a summary statement of the old version of the institutional theory of art as it appeared in *Art and the Aesthetic* and then to note some misinterpretations of aspects of the earlier version some of which might well recur with the new version unless they are forestalled. Some of these misinterpretations are due to simple misreading, but many are probably due to the unclarity of my writing.

The summary statement of the old version can begin with the definition of "work of art" which was given in *Art and the Aesthetic*.

*A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).*

First, the definition purports to be of a classificatory sense of "work of art," which is to be contrasted with an evaluative sense of the term. Some traditional theories build value into the notion of art. While I do not deny that "art" and "work of art" can be used in an evaluative way, I believe that there is a more basic, classificatory theory of art to be worked out.

Second, the first condition of art specified by the definition is artifactuality. As noted earlier, Ziff and Weitz deny that any condition is necessary for being art; they specifically deny that being an artifact is required for art. Their rejection of artifactuality seems to fly in the face of all (or virtually all) of the traditional theories of art as well as the ordinary view of people in general. The institutional theory attempts in this case to defend the ordinary view.

Third, the second condition of art specified by the definition is supposed to distinguish those artifacts which are works of art from the host of artifacts which are not art. Roughly, what this condition says is that works of art are those artifacts which have a set of properties which have acquired a certain status within a particular institutional framework called "the artworld." Further, it is claimed by the definition that this status is acquired by being conferred by someone and that it is conferred by someone acting on behalf of the artworld.

I now turn to misinterpretations of the older version of the institutional theory. A few readers misunderstood me to be using the expression "the artworld" to refer to the kind of chic cliques of the sort discussed by Tom Wolfe in *The Painted Word*: the powerful groups which have so much to say about which paintings get hung, which music gets performed, and the like. I, however, was not and am



not at all concerned with the politics of success on the art scene but rather with the nature of art and the kind of context which is required for its creation. There is no basis at all for this misreading.

More readers mistakenly thought I conceived of the artworld as a formally organized body, perhaps of a kind which has meetings and requires a quorum to do business. My intent, however, was to give an account of the artworld as the broad, informal cultural practice that I conceive it to be. This misunderstanding was in large part due to my use of the expressions "conferred upon" and "acting on behalf of" in my definition of "work of art," phrases which so readily make one think of official bodies making and carrying out policy decisions. Also, many of the analogies I used involved formal organizations acting (a state, a university, and the like). It was the analogies perhaps which seduced me into using the misleading expressions and notions. A related misunderstanding of some readers is their conclusion that I thought that it is the artworld acting as a whole which makes art or at least that in some cases this happened. My intention was to claim that it is individual persons who typically make works of art or that in some cases it is groups of persons who make art, as for example when a group of people make a movie. My intent was to claim that the artworld as a whole is the background against which art is created. Again, it was my use of "conferred upon" and "acting on behalf of" which helps the misunderstanding along. It would have been far better for me to have written of artists working with the artworld as background rather than of artists acting on behalf of the artworld. It was some of Beardsley's remarks in his article, "Is Art Essentially Institutional?", which helped me come to see the confused mixture of formal and informal language in my account of the artworld. Also, in the definition I spoke of "some person or persons" acting on behalf of the artworld. Some readers apparently took the use of the plural "persons" to refer to the artworld as a whole and to mean that the artworld as a whole *creates* works of art or at least that the artworld as a whole has to *accept* an object before it can be an artwork. I intended "persons" to refer to groups of people who create works of art as typically happens when movies are made; I did not intend to refer to the artworld as a whole, and I certainly did not intend to claim that artworld *acceptance* is required for making art.

The final misinterpretation I want to comment on is one for which I unfortunately supplied maximum ammunition. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I sometimes wrote that art is a conferred status and sometimes that it is the status of candidate for appreciation which is conferred. Although I explicitly stated there that the talk of conferring the status of art is shorthand for talking about conferring the status of candidate for appreciation, this way of writing understandably misled some people. What may now complicate the situation even more is

that although I am now abandoning the notion of conferred status of candidate for appreciation entirely, I want in this book to maintain that being a work of art is a status. The view of art as a status which I now wish to defend, however, conceives of this status not as being conferred but as being achieved in another way.

In the remarks about this last misinterpretation I have noted a change which is to be made in the theory in this book, namely, the abandonment of the notion of conferred candidacy for appreciation. However, before going on to the general topic of changes which are to be made in the theory let me note a change which occurred in earlier accounts of the theory. The first formulation of the institutional definition of "work of art" read: "A work of art in the descriptive sense is 1) an artifact 2) upon which society or some sub-group of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation." I soon realized that this formulation strongly suggests that it is some social group acting as a whole which creates art, a conclusion I had certainly not intended. Consequently, I modified the second condition to read "upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation." In correcting this problem and using the expression "acting on behalf of," I unfortunately reinforced the already overly formal sounding expression "conferred the status . . . ," and thereby supplied further grounds for the second misinterpretation.

Let me now return to the topic of the new changes which are to be made in the theory. The first change to be noted is not so much a change in the theory as a change of view of the relation of the institutional theory to Arthur Danto's writings on the nature of art. From the very first reading of it I have regarded Danto's article, "The Artworld," as an important and stimulating piece of work. For a long time I regarded the institutional theory as a kind of straightforward development of Danto's conception of the artworld. With the publication of his "Artworks and Real Things" and "Transfiguration of the Commonplace," I came to realize that the two views are not as closely related as I had thought. In the two later articles Danto maintains that *aboutness* is a necessary condition for artworks; that is, he contends that a semantic dimension is required for being a work of art. In short, he maintains that a work of art must be about something. Thus, on Danto's view insofar as any institution is involved in the nature and creation of art, it is of a linguistic or semantic nature. By contrast, the institutional view as I have conceived of it holds that the relevant institution is art-specific, that is, that it is an institution or practice the specific function of which is the creation of art and which does not necessarily involve the category of language. The two views both use the expression "the artworld" but very different things are meant by it. What is common to Danto's view and the institutional theory is the

contention that works of art are enmeshed in an essential framework or context of some considerable "thickness." Both theories specify rich contexts, but they differ widely as to the nature of the context. I should also note that I adopt Danto's "Visually-Indistinguishable-Objects Argument," the argument that if there are two visually indistinguishable objects and one is a work of art and the other is not, then there must be some context or framework in which the work of art is embedded which accounts for the different statuses of the two objects. This argument does not, of course, reveal the nature of the context.

What is certainly true is that Arthur Danto's "The Artworld" inspired the creation of the institutional theory of art.

Finally, I turn to the particular changes to be made in this book. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I devoted the bulk of my attention and space to the second condition of the definition, the condition which centers around conferring the status of candidate for appreciation, giving rather short shrift to the artifact condition. There were two reasons for this relative lack of attention. First, despite my attempt to refute the view of Weitz and others that artifactuality is not required for being a work of art, I regarded the artifactuality condition as being virtually self-evident. Consequently, my attempt at refutation was minimal. But it turns out that substantially more argument and comment is required to bring out what Weitz and others were attempting to do and to show why what seems false to some seems virtually self-evident to others. The second reason for devoting so little space to artifactuality was that it then seemed to me that all the really interesting things were embedded in the second condition. This second reason is mistaken.

One result of the unequal treatment of the two conditions was that the impression was given that the conditions were not very closely related and that artifactuality was of lesser importance. In the new version of the theory, the whole approach is through the artifactuality condition, and although the new definition retains the two-part form, it will be evident that the two parts are intimately related.

Another result of my lack of attention to the first condition was my hasty conclusion that artifactuality is something which can be conferred as well as being achieved by work. I expressed some doubt about this conclusion in *Art and the Aesthetic*. It was suggested there that perhaps some other way should be found to solve the problems that "conferred artifactuality" was supposed to take care of, namely, the problem of how *Fountain* was to be understood as an artifact of Duchamp. It now seems to me that artifactuality is just not the sort of thing that can be conferred and that *Fountain* and its like must be construed as the artifacts of artists as the result of a kind of minimal work on the part of those artists. The account of this minimal kind of work may be controversial. An added benefit of this change is that the

minimal work requirement acts as a limiting factor on the membership of the class of works of art, a factor which so many have pointed out is lacking in the old version. According to the new version, it is clear that not everything can become a work of art.

Earlier I mentioned that the notion of conferred candidacy for appreciation is dropped in the new version. The abandonment of this view is the result of two things. One thing is the acceptance of Beardsley's criticism that some of the language I was using to try to describe the various aspects of the artworld is too formal to fit the kind of institution I had in mind. Specifically, Beardsley's criticism is that the artworld as conceived in *Art and the Aesthetic* is not an institution of the kind which confers status. Another reason for abandoning conferred status of candidacy is the new emphasis on artifactuality. In the new version, it is the work done in creating an object against the background of the artworld which establishes that object as a work of art. Consequently, there is no need for the conferring of status of any kind, whether it be of candidacy for appreciation or artifactuality. The only kind of status even envisaged by the theory now is the status of being art which is achieved by the creative use of a medium. And by the way, it should perhaps be mentioned at this point that in speaking of the status of being art I do not wish to be taken to be suggesting that the object which enjoys this status is in any degree thereby valuable. Here, as before, the attempt is to give an account of the classificatory sense of "work of art."

The final change I wish to note here is a change of attitude toward the so-called problem of circularity. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I cheerfully admitted to the circularity involved in the one definition formulated there. In the new version, nothing is admitted, the circularity involved in the theory is flaunted. Moreover, in the new version, not one definition but a whole series of interlocking definitions is given. The justification for the interlockingness of the definitions is that the objects on which they focus constitute a complicated, inter-related system.

In the remainder of this introduction I shall discuss some of the presuppositions of the institutional theory of art. "Presupposition" may not be exactly the right word in some of the cases, but in any event, I shall be discussing matters which are foundational to the theory in one way or another.

The first assumption of the institutional theory is that a philosopher of art ought to take account of developments in the artworld. This does not mean that a philosopher must believe that everything an artist says is true or that everything an artist does has significance for the philosophy of art. There is, for example, no guarantee that everything an artist says is a work of art is in fact a work of art. A philosopher of art, however, must take seriously de-

velopments in the artworld, for the artworld is his primary domain and developments within it—especially radical ones—can be particularly revealing.

Secondly, I am assuming that the traditional theorists of art were right in the way they conceived of the domain of objects which they theorized about. Imitation theorists may be wrong in thinking that all works of art are imitations, but they were right in thinking that paintings, poems, plays, and the like are the things with which they should be concerned. Collingwood may have been wrong in thinking that works of art are located between the ears and that Shakespeare's plays are not works of art, but he was right in focusing on the correct domain, even if he referred to a part of that domain as "art falsely so-called." In brief, this assumption is that the theory of art is concerned with a certain kind of artifact. Since this presupposition has in recent times been challenged by Weitz and others, I find it expedient to say something by way of justification for this assumption.

A third assumption is that the theory of art is about a value-neutral, classificatory sense of "work of art." This means that something can be a work of art and be of no value, be of minimum value, be of maximum value, or be at some point on the scale between the last two. Being a work of art does not guarantee any value or any degree of value. Another way of putting this is that a theory of art should not have the result of making the expression "good art" redundant or the expression "bad art" self-contradictory. These two expressions are used to say important things and the theory of art ought to reflect this. In saying that the theory is about a value-neutral sense of "work of art," nothing other than what has just been indicated is intended.

That the classificatory-sense assumption is controversial derives from two sources. First, some uses of the expression "work of art" are laudatory, and some theorists have taken these uses to be basic. But there is a wider class of objects which contains the worthless, the indifferent, and the mediocre as well as the good and the excellent works. And since all of these works are art, it must be the wider class which is the basic domain for the philosophy of art. If someone wishes to theorize about the subclass of valuable works of art, fine, but that does not mean that it is the only set of objects worth attending to. The second reason that a classificatory theory has been controversial is that perhaps some have confused the activity of producing art with the works of art produced. The activity of producing art is of course a valuable activity. But all the products of a valuable activity need not be valuable, although of course a certain percentage would have to be. A classificatory theory deals with both the valuable and the worthless products. It is perhaps worth noting that the first theory of art—the imitation theory—is a classificatory theory. Of course, according



to the evaluational account associated with the theory, being a good imitation makes for good art; but presumably to be a work of art it is sufficient (and necessary) simply to be an imitation.

The final assumption to be noted is that artmaking is something which almost everyone can do. It is not a highly specialized activity such as nuclear physics which is closed to those who lack a certain high degree of mathematical skill. Various primitive skills are required to make art, as well as the ability to understand the nature of the enterprise. Such skills and understanding are within the grasp of quite small children. Of course the creation of masterpieces requires skills of a kind which few can attain, but masterpieces constitute only a minute part of the class of artifacts with which the theory of art is concerned.







## *Chapter II Danto and the Revival of Theory*

In recent years Arthur Danto has aroused philosophers of art from their catatonic slumbers with a series of explosive but sometimes baffling articles: "The Artworld,"<sup>1</sup> "Artworks and Real Things,"<sup>2</sup> and "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace."<sup>3</sup> Despite their perplexing nature, these three papers more than any other single factor have been responsible for the revival of interest in the philosophy of art. In this chapter I shall attempt to provide a commentary on these three articles, trying to make clear what Danto is saying and trying to evaluate his argument and claims. In commenting on these articles, I take them to be an evolution of Danto's thought, so that if a conclusion or theme in an earlier article is abandoned, replaced, or rejected in a later article, I shall assume that the judgment of the later article is Danto's considered view. In addition to commenting on the articles, since I and other writers have associated Danto's views in the philosophy of art and my own institutional theory of art, I shall try to make clear the similarities and differences of the two positions.

Danto begins the first paper, "The Artworld," by talking about Socrates' conception of art—the view that art is an imitation of objects in the world of sense. He is also concerned with the view he attributes to Socrates that we already know what art is and that this knowledge guides our use of the word "art." I shall not concern myself with the question of whether these views are actually attributable to Socrates or Plato. Danto notes that the view that we know how to use "art" correctly and identify art correctly is shared with the most modern of anti-theorists of art such as Morris Weitz. Danto then flatly denies that we can always identify artworks, presumably having in mind such things as Duchamps' *Fountain* and other oddities. He then makes two

claims: 1) the epistemological claim that artistic theories help us tell artworks from nonartworks and 2) the ontological claim that artistic theories make art possible.

I shall consider the first claim first. Notice that this claim is that artistic theories *help* us identify artworks. This may leave open the possibility that we could on some occasions identify artworks without the use of an artistic theory, and perhaps we could always identify artworks without the use of an artistic theory. But how does an artistic theory help when it does help? Danto does not say how the imitation theory helped in the past, but it presumably helped by telling people that art is imitation. If they were faced with something which is not an imitation they knew it was not art, and if they were faced with something which was an imitation they knew it was art.<sup>1</sup> Then unusual things began to happen and artworks were produced that either were not very good as imitations or were not imitations at all. At the same time, what Danto calls "the Real Theory of Art" was invented—Art, the new theory says, is the creation of forms which are not imitations. The acceptance of this theory caused people to accept the new art. But how did (or does) the Real Theory help identify artworks? If faced with an object which is an imitation the new theory tells one that it may be art (although not because it is an imitation) and that may be some help.

Before the revolution, the Imitation Theory was presumably a big help with the identification of artworks—it explicitly ruled out things which are not imitations and ruled in those which were imitations. But after the revolution, the Real Theory of Art is not really much help. All it tautologically tells one when faced with an object is that it may or may not be art. Danto apparently realizes that the Real Theory is not of much help for the identification of artworks, for he launches into a discussion of what he calls the "is" of artistic identification which presumably will help one decide if an object is an artwork or not. The nature of this "is" is very obscure. The notion of the "is" of artistic identification was subjected to very hard criticism by William Kennick<sup>2</sup> and presumably because of this criticism (and perhaps other criticism) is not mentioned in Danto's two subsequent articles. I shall not concern myself with the "is" of artistic identification. It may be that the "is" of artistic identification is the same as identifying works of art by the use of an art theory. The epistemological problem of telling artworks from nonartworks by means of an artistic theory is not raised in the two later articles either.

I turn now to Danto's ontological claim that artistic theories make art possible. He defends this claim in a discussion of the question: why is Warhol's *Brillo Carton* a work of art and an ordinary Brillo carton not? After a discussion which amounts to assuring the reader that Warhol's carton is art and the ordinary carton is not,

Danto concludes, "What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art . . . ." The theory in question is presumably the Real Theory, although he does not say so. He does not intend, however, to tie his claim solely to the Real Theory because a few lines later he writes, "It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible."<sup>7</sup> But these remarks are not an argument in support of the second claim but are simply a restatement of the claim.

Danto begins the final section of "The Artworld" by saying that he will make some final remarks "about the theories that make artworks possible . . . ." He then talks about what he calls art-relevant predicate pairs such as representational-nonrepresentational, expressionist-nonexpressionist, and the like. Presumably, each art-relevant predicate pair is tied in some way to an art theory, since the talk about predicate pairs is supposed to show how artistic theories make art possible. Danto at this point contends that it is a necessary condition for being an artwork that at least one pair of art-relevant predicates be sensibly applicable to it. He also contends that one and only one of each of the art-relevant predicates will apply to an artwork, which means that if an object is an artwork, then it will be representational or nonrepresentational and expressionist or nonexpressionist, and so on. Danto then spends the rest of the article illustrating this second contention. He should, however, defend or at least discuss his first contention that having at least one pair of art-relevant predicates is a necessary condition for something's being an artwork. The only thing he says relevant to the contention about a necessary condition occurs at the very end of the article when he says that objects become artworks in virtue of having an art-relevant predicate applied to them. But this remark just repeats the original claim.

So in the end we are left with just the unsupported claim: artistic theories make art possible. But even if Danto has given no arguments, his claim might provide a valuable insight into the nature of art. He seems to be asserting that in some sense an art theory is a necessary condition for the creation of art, but what exactly does he mean? Does he mean that one must be consciously aware of an art theory and be able to state what the theory is in order to create a work of art? In the midst of his discussion of art theories making art possible, Danto notes, "It would, I should think, never have occurred to the painters of Lascaux that they were producing *art* on those [cave] walls. Not unless there were neolithic aestheticians."<sup>8</sup> Because of the context, I take Danto to be asserting that it would not have occurred to the painters of Lascaux that they were producing art because they were not producing art. The reason that the drawings cannot be art, he seems to be saying, is that there must not have been any aestheticians

at the time. Since an aesthete is a kind of person who consciously holds an art theory and can state what the theory is, I take Danto to be implying that the painters of Lascaux or any other persons must either be aestheticians and consciously hold an art theory or have an art theory told to them by an aesthete so that they can consciously hold the theory in order to create works of art. If this is what Danto means by art theories making art possible, his claim must be false, because works of art must have been being created for a very long time before anyone consciously formulated any art theory. By the way, I do not wish to be understood to be saying that the painters of Lascaux were, *too*, producing art and, therefore, that Danto must be wrong because of this. No one knows enough of the activities of the painters of Lascaux to say one way or the other what it was they were doing. It seems safe enough, however, to say that artworks were being produced in more recent times long before art theories were being produced by aestheticians.

His remarks about neolithic aestheticians notwithstanding, someone might want to interpret Danto's remarks in a weaker sense to claim that an art theory's making art possible is simply the having of ideas either explicitly or implicitly about what counts as art in order to create art. This claim seems reasonable enough as a practical account of the basic conditions for the creation of art, but it would certainly be employing the weakest possible notion of having a theory. In this weak sense, everyone would have a theory about almost everything that he did: one would have a theory of gravity in throwing a ball; a theory of personality in dealing with people; and the like. If this weak sense of theory had been what Danto intended, surely he would have been able to say so in a clear and obvious way. In fact, what Danto does say about art theory and creating art, including his remark about the lack of neolithic aestheticians, makes it sound as if he has in mind much more than this minimal interpretation.

I conclude that in "The Artworld" neither the claim that artistic theories help us identify artworks nor the claim that artistic theories make art possible, understood as Danto seems to intend them, is established. Perhaps, one should not worry much about these two claims, for Danto does not raise them at all in the later articles. The theory that art theories make art possible seems to be replaced by another theory in the later articles; at the very least, Danto puts forth *another* account of what is necessary for art.

In his second article, "Artworks and Real Things," Danto is not directly concerned with the question of identifying artworks. Here he is primarily concerned to discover what it is that makes something a work of art, but, as just mentioned, he does not raise the notion that artistic theories make art possible.

Danto begins the second article, as before, with some remarks



about the Platonic philosophy of art. The main point of these initial remarks seems to be that according to the imitation theory there is a "distance" between art and the reality it imitates. He ends the discussion by in effect asking—What happens to that "distance" when in the present day some artworks are visually indistinguishable from nonartworks (reality)? He is, I think, convinced that art "is at a distance" from reality. His concern then is this: Since we have (rightly) abandoned the imitation theory we do not have as yet a clear way to understand that "distance." The problem of the second article is to show how of two visually indistinguishable objects one can be an artwork (and stand at a "distance" from reality) and the other can be a nonartwork (a reality). Since the difference between the two objects is not visually discoverable, it must reside in the different backgrounds of the objects.

Danto conducts a thought experiment with four visually indistinguishable objects: a necktie painted uniformly blue by Picasso, a tie painted by a forger who copies the Picasso tie, a tie painted by a child to make his father's necktie attractive, and a tie painted blue by Cezanne. According to Danto, only Picasso's tie is an artwork and "stands at a distance from reality," the other three are simply real things (nonartworks). The latter three are simply ties which have had paint put on them. Why is this? Cezanne's tie is not an artwork because in his time the art community, which presumably included Cezanne, was not ready for it. Today's art community was ready for Picasso's tie. Whatever this readiness involves (and it is not very clear), according to Danto it is a background which enables Picasso to make a statement with his tie, and with the background missing Cezanne cannot make a statement with his tie. The forger's tie is just a quotation of the statement made by Picasso's tie, but a quotation of a statement is not a statement. The child's tie is not a statement because the child could not "... have sufficiently internalized the history and theory of art to make a statement . . . by means of a painted necktie."<sup>10</sup> (Later Danto seems to deny that a child can create a work of art of any kind, not just not create one with a painted tie.)<sup>11</sup> Since Picasso's tie is a statement, it is, according to Danto, a representation of reality. By being a statemental representation of reality, the tie is at a remove from reality but without being an imitation. Thus, what Danto takes to be a correct insight of the imitation theory (art is at a remove from reality) is satisfied by Picasso's tie without its being an imitation. Danto concludes the episode of the ties by saying that Picasso's tie is (i.e., would be if it existed) "... a statement in part about reality and art sufficiently penetrating to enable its own enfranchisement into the world of art."<sup>12</sup> It seems at this point that Danto is at least suggesting one of several theories of art. Given the just-quoted remark, he may be suggesting a sufficient condition of art:

1) if something is a) a statement and b) a sufficiently penetrating statement, then that is a sufficient condition for that thing to be an artwork. But perhaps he is suggesting only a necessary condition of art: 2) in order for something to be an artwork, it is necessary for that thing to be at some remove from reality (and being a statement is *one* way of being at some remove from reality, but there are or may be other ways). Or perhaps he is suggesting a more specific necessary condition of art: 3) in order for something to be an artwork, it is necessary for that thing to be at some remove from reality by being a statement.

Danto next introduces a discussion of what he calls "Found Drama," and it is here that one finds which of the three possibilities just mentioned is his actual view. A "Found Drama" consists of a playwright declaring "in the light of certain conventions" that an arbitrarily selected slice of the life of a particular family is an artwork. His treatment of "Found Drama" leads Danto to the conclusion that "artwork" is an ascription which is true of an object if certain defeating conditions do not hold. He then goes on to discuss two defeating conditions: being a fake and being the product of a nonartist. The case of fakes is virtually identical with the case of the copy of Picasso's tie; a fake cannot be an artwork because a fake does not make a statement, it only pretends to. The defeating condition of not being by an artist turns out to have the same source as fakes; the examples he gives—children, chimpanzees, and counterfeiters—turn out to be individuals who for one reason or another do not make statements by the products they produce. These remarks suggest that Danto is opting for a view which involves there being a certain necessary condition for art, but is not here concerned with sufficient conditions of art. The view could be formulated as follows: in order for something to be an artwork it is necessary for that thing to be a nonfake, and be the result of an artist and so on. Since each of the two defeating conditions Danto mentions turns on the notion of making a statement, perhaps all the defeating conditions do. If they all turn on making a statement, then the view just formulated reduces to 3) above. But perhaps there are defeating conditions which have a different source. Danto makes clear his intention by asserting that "art is a language of sorts, in the sense at least that an artwork says something, . . ."<sup>13</sup> Assuming that "says something" means "makes a statement," this assertion means that making a statement is, according to Danto, a necessary condition of art. This conclusion clearly means that Danto's position is 3) above, namely, in order for something to be an artwork, it is necessary for that thing to be at some remove from reality by being a statement.

In the brief concluding section of "Artworks and Real Things" Danto draws the paradoxical conclusion that in the present day art

and the philosophy of art have become the same thing! His reasons are 1) art has increasingly become "... its own (and only) subject ..." and 2) the philosophy of art has as its subject art.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps it is true that art has increasingly taken itself for its subject (although it might not be very easy to say precisely what this means), but I doubt that this is as pervasively true as Danto suggests. But suppose that a work of art does take as its subject art, would this make it philosophy of art? As Colin Lyas notes, to conclude that two things (in this case art and the philosophy of art) are identical because they share a characteristic (in this case have art as subject) is to commit the fallacy of undistributed middle term.<sup>14</sup> Also, it is quite possible that when art takes itself as its own subject that art and philosophy of art address themselves to their subjects in different ways.

The third article, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," begins, as did the second article, with the consideration of two visually indistinguishable objects: a painting and an accidentally produced object which exactly resembles it. The problem again is to say why one is art and the other is not. Danto concludes these initial remarks by saying, "Something is an artwork, then, only relative to certain art-historical presuppositions. . . ."<sup>15</sup> This remark is reminiscent of the first article, "The Artworld," which talked of artistic theories and art history, but Danto does not follow up this lead and tell us what the art-historical presuppositions are and how they function to provide a background for art. What he does do is to pretty much reproduce the substance of "Artworks and Real Things." He is again essentially concerned to claim that all artworks have a particular necessary property. This article is an advance over the second mainly in that its aim and terms are more clearly specified.

Danto here gives for the first time a clear account of what he means by the term "reality" in the context of these three articles. Reality is characterized semantically. Language has a representative function. Reality is that which is "devoid of representationality."<sup>16</sup> Danto then advances his thesis about art: artworks "... are linguistic to the extent of admitting semantical assessment and in contrasting in the required essential way with reality."<sup>17</sup> More specifically he claims that artworks are *about* something. This is a bit of a change from the second article where it was claimed that artworks make statements. No explanation is given for the change. He does note for the first time that his thesis does not distinguish artworks from other means of "representation," and he does not propose (at least there) to make the distinction.<sup>18</sup> It is now clear that, even if Danto does not give a definition of "art," he has claimed that art is a species of language, that is, that "being linguistic" is a necessary condition of "art."

After a great deal of discussion of a variety of topics which touch on the central issue, Danto returns to his thesis at the end of his

article. He distinguishes the vehicle of a work of art (in the case of a painting presumably the line and colors), the denotation function or aboutness of an artwork, and the content of a work (what it denotes or is about). He asserts that "even the most abstract painting" has these features. Consider now some of the works of art which Danto has used to illustrate his theory. The *Polish Rider* and *La Tempesta* are traditional paintings which in a clear sense are about something. His hypothetical *Untitled* which is simply a square of primed canvas he claims is about art. Works such as *Untitled* may stand in line of descent from Duchamp's *Fountain* and may perhaps be said to be about art, that is, in some way not easy to explain they seem to be being used to indicate an attitude about art. Also, without giving an example, Danto has said that "even the most abstract painting" is about something.<sup>20</sup> This is, I think, true, because an *abstract* painting abstracts from something and is therefore about that something. But what of nonobjective painting? Such paintings have a historical connection with abstract paintings but are generally considered to have crossed the line which marks the loss of representation. Danto's hypothetical *Untitled* is of course a nonobjective painting which I have admitted may be about something, but what of more typical nonobjective paintings? For example, consider a design which consists of a number of interpenetrating triangular-shaped areas and is entitled #23. Is it about triangles? About art? Nothing in the painting or its title gives one any reason to think that it is about anything at all in any ordinary sense of "about." Perhaps Danto would deny that #23 is an artwork, but there are many works of this type which are generally regarded as artworks. He may be making such a denial at the end of his article when he says of Jasper Johns' work that it collapses "... the distance between vehicle and content, making the properties of the thing shown coincident with the properties of the vehicle, and hence destroying the semantical space between reality and art. Needless to say, I regard all such attempts as logically foredoomed."<sup>21</sup> Logically foredoomed to what, Danto does not say but presumably to not being art. He is in a difficulty and when faced with works which are not representational (in his broad sense) he must say, apparently that they are not art. Thus, in the end we have the case of a philosopher trying to dictate to artists. Danto should have backed off from his semantic thesis instead of trying to dictate to artists and sought to explain the space (the difference) between art and reality (nonart) in some other way. It is worthwhile noting that even if Danto's view could be patched up so that it fits paintings, it does not seem possible that the great bulk of music could be shown to have a semantic dimension.

Let me sum up the content of the three articles before going on to compare the institutional theory of art as it has thus far been stated<sup>22</sup> with Danto's view. Assuming that the articles represent an

evolution of Danto's thought on art rather than a collection of his thoughts, a number of conclusions follow. The view that artistic theories make art possible seems to have been abandoned. The focus of the last two articles is the semantical nature of art; in the second article it takes the form of the claim that artworks make statements and in the third the form of the claim that artworks are about something. It seems that the statement thesis has been replaced by the aboutness thesis, so that in the end the positive theoretical content of the three essays comes down to the view that it is a necessary condition of being an artwork that it be about something. Danto alludes to the art-historical conditions which make it possible for an object to be about something, but he never tells us what they are. The aboutness thesis is not supported by arguments, but is presumably presented as an insight which when pointed out is obvious or at least plausible. While it is true that many artworks are about something (and that this may be an important thing about those works), it seems that some works are just not about anything. So *aboutness* cannot be a necessary condition of art. I conclude that Danto's claim about art is false. Even if, however, Danto's positive thesis about art is false, his indistinguishable-objects argument is a solid contribution to the philosophy of art. In fact, this argument, in showing art's dependence on a background, has furnished the basis for the revival of theorizing about art.

I shall now proceed to the comparison of Danto's view with the institutional theory as it was stated in *Art and the Aesthetic*. Formally, the two theories as proposed have different scopes. Danto is concerned only to specify a necessary condition of art; he explicitly says that he is not attempting to distinguish art from other modes of representation. (In this chapter, I am talking only about Danto's three articles. In his recent book, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Danto develops his views at great length and attempts to distinguish a second necessary condition of art.) The institutional theory of art is an explicit attempt to give the necessary and sufficient conditions of art.

The two views agree that "the background" of artworks plays an essential role in making those objects art. Danto makes the point about background in a striking way by focusing on visually indistinguishable objects, one of which is an artwork while the other is not. For Danto the background enables the object which is art to be about something. But he is not very helpful about what makes up the background. In "The Artworld" he really says no more about what makes art possible than that it is "... an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."<sup>2</sup> In "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace" he says only, "Something is an artwork, then, only relative to certain art-historical presuppositions . . . ." Again this is all he has to say about the background which makes it possible for an object to be about something. In *Art and the Aesthetic* at least a



sketchy account is given of what I thought the background to consist of. The background, according to the institutional theory, is a structure of persons fulfilling various roles and engaging in a practice which has developed through history. (This is a characterization of the artworld as it was described in the earlier book. In chapter V of this book, I will give what I hope is a fuller and more careful description of the artworld.) Within this structure, some persons serve to create objects for possible appreciation by themselves and others. On this view, there is no requirement that the objects created be about something, although many of them are.

The two theories also agree that, to use Danto's words, there is "a space" between art and something else, although the two kinds of things separated by "a space" are characterized differently by the two views. For Danto "the space" is between art which is representational and reality which in this context is that which is "devoid of representationality." "The space" is the difference between language and that to which it refers. For the institutional theory, "the space" is between art and nonart, the former being the set of objects which occupy positions in the structure which I have called "the artworld."

In "Artworks and Real Things" Danto claimed that fakes (forgeries, copies, and the like) cannot be artworks, giving as his reason that they are not statements. They are like quotations of statements which are not themselves statements. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I followed Danto's lead, concluding that fakes are not works of art. I now think that it was a mistake to have drawn this conclusion.<sup>23</sup> Danto's argument that they cannot be statements and, therefore, not art seems to me to be invalid, as it seems false that being a statement (or being about something) is a necessary condition of art. Of course, it might still be the case that fakes are not works of art for some other reason. But I see no reason why such works cannot satisfy all the requirements for being works of art in the classificatory sense: forgeries are works of art about whose creator we are or have been mistaken; copies are unimaginative or completely derivative works of art. These remarks may give the impression that I once thought that making a statement is a necessary condition of art and that that was the reason I thought fakes not to be works of art. I have never thought that making a statement is a necessary condition of art; I simply failed to understand Danto's argument.

In "Artworks and Real Things," Danto says, "... children, chimpanzees, counterfeiters: tracing an object to any of these defeats it as an artwork. . . ." <sup>26</sup> I have just made some suggestions about counterfeiters (forgers, copiers). About chimpanzees, I am inclined to agree with Danto, although he and I have different reasons for this conclusion. Chimpanzees can neither grasp the institutional framework of artworks (my view) nor make objects which are about something (Danto's view). I am of course talking about present and



past chimpanzees. The training now being given some apes might make it possible for them to create art some day. I think Danto is wrong about children. Even if his own view is granted, I do not see why a child is incapable of making a statement with a painting or making an object which is about something, unless Danto means by a child an infant in arms or close to it. In any event, children can be and are taught the rudiments of artmaking at a very tender age, and the institutional theory has no difficulty in accomodating this fact. Children may for a long time lack the technique and control which is only possible with long training, practice, and more mature intellectual and physiological development, but they catch on to the general idea of artmaking nonetheless and can produce imaginative if primitive works of art of great charm.

I have adopted the name "the institutional theory of art" for my own view. There are reasons for saying that Danto's view is institutional in nature, although even if this is granted the two views are very different. In "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," as already noted, Danto writes, "Something is an artwork, then, only relative to certain art-historical presuppositions, . . . ." and this remark has an institutional sound to it, but, also as noted, Danto tells us no more about these presuppositions. In the earlier "Artworks and Real Things" Danto had made the even more institutional sounding remark that "artwork" is an ascriptive term which attaches ". . . to objects in the light of certain conventions. . . ." But instead of characterizing the conventions, Danto goes on to discuss what he takes to be some defeating conditions of art: being a fake and being of nonartistic provenance. As it turns out, these defeating conditions involve not being a statement or, as the third article would put it, not being about something. The conventions, therefore, must be conventions which are involved in making a statement or making something be about something. Indeed, Danto states that ". . . art is a language of sorts, in the sense at least that an artwork says something. . . ." Within Danto's theory the conventions involved in artmaking (insofar as we can infer anything about them) are very similar to the conventions generally involved in language use. Thus, insofar as one can tell, Danto's theory is institutional only in the sense that a language of sorts would be institutional. He does not try to tell us anything specifically about the institutional nature of art as art. At most, Danto tries to show the institutional nature of art as a language of sorts. The institutional theory is an attempt to sketch an account of the specific institutional structure within which works of art have their being. Whereas Danto sees art as a language of sorts, the institutional theory does not.



### Chapter III Art as Artifice

Philosophers of art may not know much about art, but they once knew that a work of art is an artifact, which is—as the dictionary tells us—“an object made by man, especially with a view to subsequent use.” This fact about art was so evident to them that they did not bother to say that works of art are artifacts, although they clearly assumed that they were. It must have seemed such an obvious fact to them that they thought no one had to be told. Besides, these old-fashioned philosophers were more concerned with matters they took to be controversial, say, with whether art is an imitation or an expression of emotion or a symbol of human feeling. It should be clear that Danto's thoughts about art belong to this old school of art theorizing. However radical some of his ideas are, Danto is, I think, talking about artifacts. There is today, however, an influential group of philosophers of art who are convinced that a work of art need not be an artifact; they have developed a theory which yields a *new* conception of art. What brought about this radical challenge to our old conception of art?

In the first part of this chapter I will examine and evaluate the new conception of art, focusing on its conclusions about artifactuality. The view that I am calling “the new conception of art” is that of Morris Weitz<sup>1</sup> and those who follow him. The somewhat similar view of Paul Ziff<sup>2</sup> needs a rather different treatment and will require a separate discussion. In the last part of this chapter I will comment on what I now regard as the mistaken notion of conferred artifactuality set forth in *Art and the Aesthetic* and elsewhere.

The chief conclusion to be drawn in this chapter, contrary to the

new conception of art, is that art is artifactual. This conclusion is necessary for the development of the institutional theory of art but does not of course distinguish it from the traditional theories of art. The aim of this chapter is perhaps best thought of as a justification for the return to the traditional way of philosophizing about art, insofar as its underlying assumption is that works of art are artifacts. It should be made clear at this point that an artifact need not be a physical object. For example, a poem is not a physical object, but it is man-made and is, therefore, an artifact.

Philosophers have recently begun to take notice of how the expressions "art" and "work of art" are actually used and to draw conclusions from these linguistic facts. They have noticed that in ordinary speech "art" and "work of art" are sometimes applied to artifacts such as the *Mona Lisa* and the *Night Watch*, but that sometimes these expressions are applied to nonartifacts such as sunsets and waterfalls. Many would regard the application of "work of art" or "art" to an object such as a sunset or a waterfall to be a metaphorical use of the expression, but the new conception of art, I shall try to show does not. Presumably, this usage has been occurring for a very long time and has nothing to do with recent developments in the artworld.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this long-standing kind of usage, in recent times a more extraordinary kind of usage of "art" and "work of art" has occurred within the artworld and has also influenced philosophers. Some recent artists have claimed things which they themselves have not made in any obvious way as their art, in part because they have called the objects "art." For example, Duchamp declared that a urinal was *Fountain*, and it has been reported that Dali pointed at some rocks, said they were art, and claimed they were thereby art.

Philosophers of art such as Weitz and those who follow him have taken note of these uses of "art" and "work of art." These philosophers have also been influenced by the claims of Wittgenstein and others that at least some of our concepts are not governed by necessary and sufficient conditions. Such concepts have been characterized as being open, i.e., not "closed" by necessary and sufficient conditions. These philosophers of art have concluded that the concept of *art* (or *work of art*) is open because the wide variety of the uses of "art" (or "work of art") does not exhibit any common feature. If there is no common feature, then no feature can be necessary and no set of features can be necessary and sufficient for the use of the concept of *art*.

What picture of the concept of *art* do these philosophers of art give? According to the new concept of *art*, at any given time there will be a set of objects to which the word "art" can be correctly applied. The members of the class will be very diverse with no necessity for a

common feature. The criteria which the objects will have satisfied in order to be works of art will be a large disjunctive set. Although the members of the class of works of art have no common feature, there are resemblances such that every member resembles some other member. The class of works of art may be enlarged at any time. It may be done in this way: someone who is familiar with works of art notes that some object *A* which is not a work of art is similar in some respect to some work of art; he says that *A* is a work of art and *A* becomes a work of art. Such a new addition to the set of works of art may supply a new criterion, and if it does a new disjunct is tacked on to the set of criteria of *art*. On this view, the concept of *art* is constantly changing by adding to its criteria (or as some say, evolving). According to the new view, the concept of *art* is a kind of conceptual vortex which continually draws into itself new criteria. The bases for this adding of new criteria to the concept of *art* and new objects to the class of works of art are 1) noted similarity and 2) calling something "art." Noted similarity and calling something "art" are, for Wertz, sufficient for making that something art.

Traditional philosophers of art have been interested in only a small subset of the class of works of art as the new conception of art conceives of the class of works of art, namely, the subset of paintings, poems, plays, and the like. The traditional philosophers have tried to develop theories which capture the essential features of the works which occupy this subset. The new philosophers of art are claiming that the interest of the old philosophers of art is too narrow. It is wrong, they say, for a philosopher of art to focus attention only on this small subset of art; one ought to focus attention on the whole class of objects to which "art" and "work of art" can be meaningfully applied. All meaningful uses of "art" and "work of art" should function as the touchstone of the philosophy of art. It is the total set of such uses of these expressions which determines what the concept of *art* is and which objects are included in the class of works of art. The new conception of art may be more or less summed up by the following principle-like statement: Any meaningful use of the expression "art" or "work of art" marks the use of the concept of *art* and refers to an individual which is literally a member of the class of art objects.

Maurice Mandelbaum<sup>1</sup> in an early criticism of the new conception of *art* noted that Wittgenstein, who is Wertz's model, had not spoken simply of resemblance or similarity but rather of *family* resemblance. Mandelbaum pointed out that family resemblance is not simply a matter of resemblance, but rather it is resemblance among those who share a genetic relationship. Thus, family resemblance has a two-fold criterion: resemblance and genetic connection. Similarly, Mandelbaum maintains resemblance or similarity alone cannot be a criterion for either the concept *game* or the concept *art*. For if similar-

ity alone were the criterion of *game* or *art*, then each concept would apply to practically everything, since everything resembles everything else. What Mandelbaum failed to notice was that for the new conception of *art* there is a two-fold criterion for art: similarity *plus* the use of the word "art." Thus, the new conception of *art* is more complicated than Mandelbaum thought, and it does try to limit the far-reaching inclusiveness of similarity alone by requiring the use of "art" or "work of art." The use of "art" or "work of art" does not provide a genetic connection of the kind enjoyed by members of a family; it is just the second factor in the new conception of *art*. Whether this particular two-fold criterion is adequate is of course another matter.

A close look at the new conception of art reveals some interesting consequences. One striking feature of the new conception is that it makes it impossible to use "art" or "work of art" metaphorically. Someone comes upon an object which is not a work of art and desires to call attention to it and praise it by calling it "a work of art" because of its similarities to some work of art. The person so calls the object, and it literally becomes a work of art. Thus, instead of applying "work of art" metaphorically, the person has created a work of art. The only objects to which "work of art" could be applied metaphorically are objects which the speaker thinks do not resemble a work of art, but in such cases there would be no point in using the term because there would be no basis for the metaphor.

A second interesting feature of the new conception is the way in which it makes it impossible for two people really to disagree over whether an object is a work of art. Suppose Arthur and Zachary attempt to disagree over whether a certain object is a work of art. Zachary says the object is not a work of art. Arthur replies that the object is a work of art. Since the object is bound to resemble some prior-established work of art and Arthur has called it a work of art, the object becomes a work of art, and Arthur wins. Next time, if Zachary persists in holding to the new conception, he will know not to try to take the negative side of such a question.

A third striking feature of the new conception is that, unless it is supplemented in some way, it requires an infinite regress of works of art which means that there could not be any works of art at all. On the new view, the members of the class of works of art will have in common as art-making features the resembling of some prior-established work of art and of having been called "art" or "work of art." It is the art-making requirement of resembling some prior-established work of art which causes the problem. For example, according to the new conception of art, today's sunset (Saturday's) could be a work of art in part because it resembles Friday's sunset which was a work of art. But why was Friday's sunset a work of art?



Because it resembled Thursday's sunset which was a work of art. And why was Thursday's sunset a work of art? Because it resembled a painting of a sunset which in turn resembled an earlier painting or an earlier sunset, and so on. The new conception has no way to block the regress, but if it could not be blocked there could be no works of art. The point of the regress argument is that if the new conception of art were all there is to the notion of art, it would have been impossible for there ever to have been any art at all. Since works of art exist, the new conception must be wrong. The new conception requires supplementing; it needs some way of showing how something can be a work of art independently of whether it resembles a prior-established work of art and how such a work of art can block the infinite regress. Such a "blocking" work of art might in fact resemble a prior-established work of art, but its *being* a work of art must not *depend* on its resembling a prior-established work of art. The new conception of art altered in the required way would be a "double" theory; it would have to have two ways in which something could come to art: 1) resembling a prior-established work of art and being called "art" and 2) some other way which is independent of the condition of resembling a prior-established work of art.

To sum up, the new concept of *art* has several interesting properties. In either its altered or unaltered form the new conception makes it impossible to use "art" or "work of art" metaphorically and impossible to disagree about whether an object is a work of art, and this seems to make the concept of *art* different from other concepts. But, of course, maybe it just is different. Furthermore, the new conception of art altered in the way required yields two very different subclasses of works of art.

Paul Ziff's version of the new conception of art differs from Weitz's in that calling something "art" plays no role. It also differs in speaking of *sufficient* similarity rather than simply of similarity. Ziff's view may be summed up as follows: something is a work of art if and only if it has enough characteristics which sufficiently resemble those features of a characteristic case which make the characteristic case a work of art. By "characteristic case" Ziff means a clear-cut case of a work of art, and he gives as an example of such a case Poussin's "The Rape of the Sabine Women." Ziff remarks that "No rules can be given to determine what is or is not a sufficient degree of similarity." Presumably, one would be able to tell in given cases. (By the way, it is clear that artifactuality is not required by Ziff for a sufficient degree of similarity.)

Ziff's version of the new conception would not rule out the metaphorical use of "work of art." Things which are similar to works of art but not sufficiently similar to *be* works of art could be called "works of art" metaphorically; such usage would not turn those things

into works of art. Also, on Ziff's view it is quite possible for people to disagree about whether something is a work of art. What they would have to debate about is whether the object is sufficiently similar to a characteristic work of art. There would be no ready way to settle such disputes, but they would be possible.

But if Ziff's version of the new conception allows for metaphorical use and disputes about whether something is a work of art, it must be altered in a way similar to the way in which Weitz's account requires altering. The fact that Ziff's view differs from Weitz's in that it specifies 1) *sufficient* similarity rather than just similarity and 2) similarity to a characteristic case of a work of art rather than just similarity to a work of art does not prevent it from generating an infinite regress. Unless there is also some way of becoming art in addition to being sufficiently similar to a characteristic case of a work of art, an infinite regress of characteristic cases is required. Despite their differences, Weitz's and Ziff's views each require two different ways of becoming art in order to block a regress. The two ways required by either view are not, however, merely two distinct ways of becoming art; they are necessarily related in that the similarity way of becoming art depends on the nonsimilarity way of becoming art. There could never be art of the similarity kind if there had not first been art of the nonsimilarity kind. Nonsimilarity art has a kind of priority which makes it primary; nonsimilarity art forms a *core* of the class of works of art as that class must be depicted when the details of Weitz's and Ziff's views are worked out.

The new conception of art in either of its versions does not attempt to give an account of the nonsimilarity core of art. Indeed, the whole thrust of the new conception is to suggest that similarity art is the complete story. Even so, both Weitz and Ziff say things which imply, although they are unaware of it, that nonsimilarity art is most plausibly identified with artifactual art. (By "artifactual art" I mean artifacts which are or were intended by their creators to be art.) Weitz writes, ". . . mostly when we describe something as a work of art, we do so under the conditions of there being present some sort of artifact, made by human skill, ingenuity, and imagination, which embodies in its sensuous, public medium—stone, wood, sounds, words, etc.—certain distinguishable elements and relations."<sup>6</sup> And when Ziff discusses the notion of a characteristic case of a work of art, he uses as his example Poussin's "The Rape of the Sabine Women." It would seem that, for Weitz, what we "mostly" have in mind and, for Ziff, what we "characteristically" have in mind when we speak of a work of art is a certain sort of artifact, that is, a work of art which is a work of art, not because of its resemblance to any other *object*, but because of the way in which it *came to be*. Of course, there is nothing in the new conception which *necessitates* that nonsimilarity art has to be artifac-

tual, but the ways in which both Weitz and Ziff develop their account strongly suggests artifactuality. Furthermore, I believe that its being artifactual is the only plausible way of conceiving of the nature of nonsimilarity art—the art which the new conception presupposes as the core of the class of works of art. I realize that I have not proven that artifactual art can be identified with nonsimilarity art. It is possible, for example, that at some time in the past that people just began calling a particular group of objects (say, a particular set of rocks) “works of art” and that this set of objects is the original nonsimilarity art. Any member of this set could block the regress, and, thus, there is an alternative to artifactual art for the role of regress-blocker. Artifactual art, however, seems to me to be a much more plausible candidate for nonsimilarity art, although I admit that I cannot prove the identity of nonsimilarity art and artifactual art.

The new conception of art in either of its versions is, then, a “double” theory, requiring two very different ways for something to become art. The class of works of art, on this view, consists of two very distinct subclasses: 1) the subclass of similarity art, each member of which is a member in virtue of its resemblance to such prior-established or characteristic work of art and 2) the subclass of artifactual art (nonsimilarity art), each member of which is a member in virtue of being an artifact. The subclass of artifactual art is the old familiar class of paintings, poems, musical pieces, and the like, which are crafted in various traditional ways.

Given the great internal cohesiveness of the subclass of artifactual art and the weak bond (similarity) which unites the diffuse subclass of similarity art to the subclass of artifactual art, why should the members of the two classes be thought to be literally things of the same type, i.e., literally works of art? Put otherwise, given these classes and their relation, why should we think that the new conception of art has given an accurate account of our conception of art? There is clearly an important relationship between what I have called “artifactual art” and “similarity art” (with the former having a certain kind of priority), but it does not follow from this that both are literally art. The kind of relationship which exists between artifactual art and similarity art seems more like the kind of relationship which typically holds between the class picked out by the literal uses of a word and the class picked out by the metaphorical uses of that word than it does like anything else.

The philosophy of art has traditionally been the task of theorizing about the essential nature of a class of artifacts: paintings, poems, plays, and the like. In view of the foregoing remarks, how seriously should one take the view of some philosophers of language that philosophers of art must abandon their traditional task as impossible because “art” and “work of art” can be meaningfully applied to nonar-

tifacts as well as artifacts? I have tried to show above that there is some reason for thinking that artifactuality is a necessary condition for literal uses of "art" and "work of art." But even if it were the case that both artifactual art and similarity art are literally art, why should the philosopher of art abandon his traditional concern with what in effect is artifactual art? What I have here been calling "artifactual art" is the product of a certain kind of human activity: an activity of making. Similarity art is a result of another kind of human activity: roughly, the noticing of similarities. Surely these two activities are sufficiently different that a philosopher can focus theoretically on artifactual art and the activity of making it without bringing in similarity art; that is, he can do traditional philosophy of art. (Of course, one cannot focus theoretically on similarity art without bringing in artifactual art, because the former presupposes the latter.) If a philosopher of art desires, he might try to make whatever theoretical remarks there are to be made about similarity art also, and in so doing enter the wider sphere of the philosopher of language. Acting in the capacity of philosopher of language, he might even try to develop a comprehensive theory of artifactual art plus similarity art.

Is it enough to note that artifactual art can be distinguished from similarity art as the product of a different kind of activity? Does this difference alone justify focusing attention on artifactual art alone, as the traditional philosophers of art have unhesitatingly done? But it is not that the activities in question are merely different; they are so very different that it would just never occur to anyone to try to subsume the two activities and their products under the same theory, unless they were under the influence of powerful philosophical motives—motives which regard the use of words or similarities as determining concepts. But while usage or similarity may be a helpful indication as to what belongs where, the nature of the actual activities and their products (to which the words apply and between which the similarities obtain) must be taken into account as determinants of concepts. And the activity of making and the activity of noticing similarities are so different it does not seem possible that their respective products can be things of the same type. What justification could be given for forcing these products into the same category? Consider this example from Hume's *Treatise*. "... Let us suppose, that by the dropping of its seed, [a tree] produces a sapling below it, which springing up by degrees, at last overtops and destroys the parent tree: I ask, if in this instance there be wanting any relation, which is discoverable in parricide or ingratitude?" Now someone might say of the still living tree, "That tree is a parricide," and it would be a perfectly reasonable thing to say. Does the meaningfulness of the statement mean that the tree is literally a parricide and that moral philosophers and law enforcement officers must concern themselves with the case? Presumably not, and

I do not see that there is any more reason why philosophers of art and art critics should concern themselves with similarity art.

The first question with which philosophers of art must deal is "What are the limits of *making*?" not "What are the limits of the use of 'art' and 'work of art'?" or "What are the limits of similarity?" I shall consider the problem of the limits of *making* in my remarks on conferred artifactuality at the end of this chapter.

In the foregoing the concept of art was the focus of attention; let me now shift emphasis a bit and talk about the closely related topic of the meaning of "art" or "work of art." In *Art and the Aesthetic* I spoke of "art" (or "work of art") as having more than one sense, and a number of people have objected to this way of speaking. I claimed that there is a classificatory sense, an evaluative sense, and a derivative sense. The classificatory sense was taken as being applicable to the class of objects which includes as typical members the *Mona Lisa*, Grandma Moses' paintings, drawings made by children in art classes, and so on. The evaluative sense was taken as being applicable to the class of objects which includes as typical members the Grand Canyon, a particular bit of broken-field running by a football player, Cezanne's *The Saint Victoire, Seen from the Quarry Called Bibemus*, and so on. The derivative sense was taken as being applicable to the class of objects which has as its members objects which are not members of the classificatory class but which resemble members of the classificatory class.

Whether or not speaking of a number of senses of "work of art" is the correct way of conceiving of this matter I am not sure. The original motivation for speaking of a variety of senses of "work of art" was an attempt to combat Weitz's view that "work of art" cannot be defined because the class of works of art is one whose members have no common feature. The implication of Weitz's view is, I believe, that it is pointless to speak of senses (or even a sense) of "work of art." Earlier an account of Weitz's conception of *art* or *work of art* was given. Recall now the general features of that description: the expression "art" (or "work of art") is used on a wide variety of occasions such that the objects to which the expression applies constitute a diverse set and the objects have no (defining) feature in common. One basis for something's being included in the set is resemblance to an already established work of art, but resemblance is not enough because many objects which are not art resemble works of art in some way. The application of the expression "art" or "work of art" also functions in resemblance cases in making something art. So on Weitz's view, resembling a prior-established work of art and being called "art" is sufficient for making something art. Weitz speaks of particular resemblances as *criteria* of art, but for him this is really one complex *criterion* of art: resembling prior-established art and being

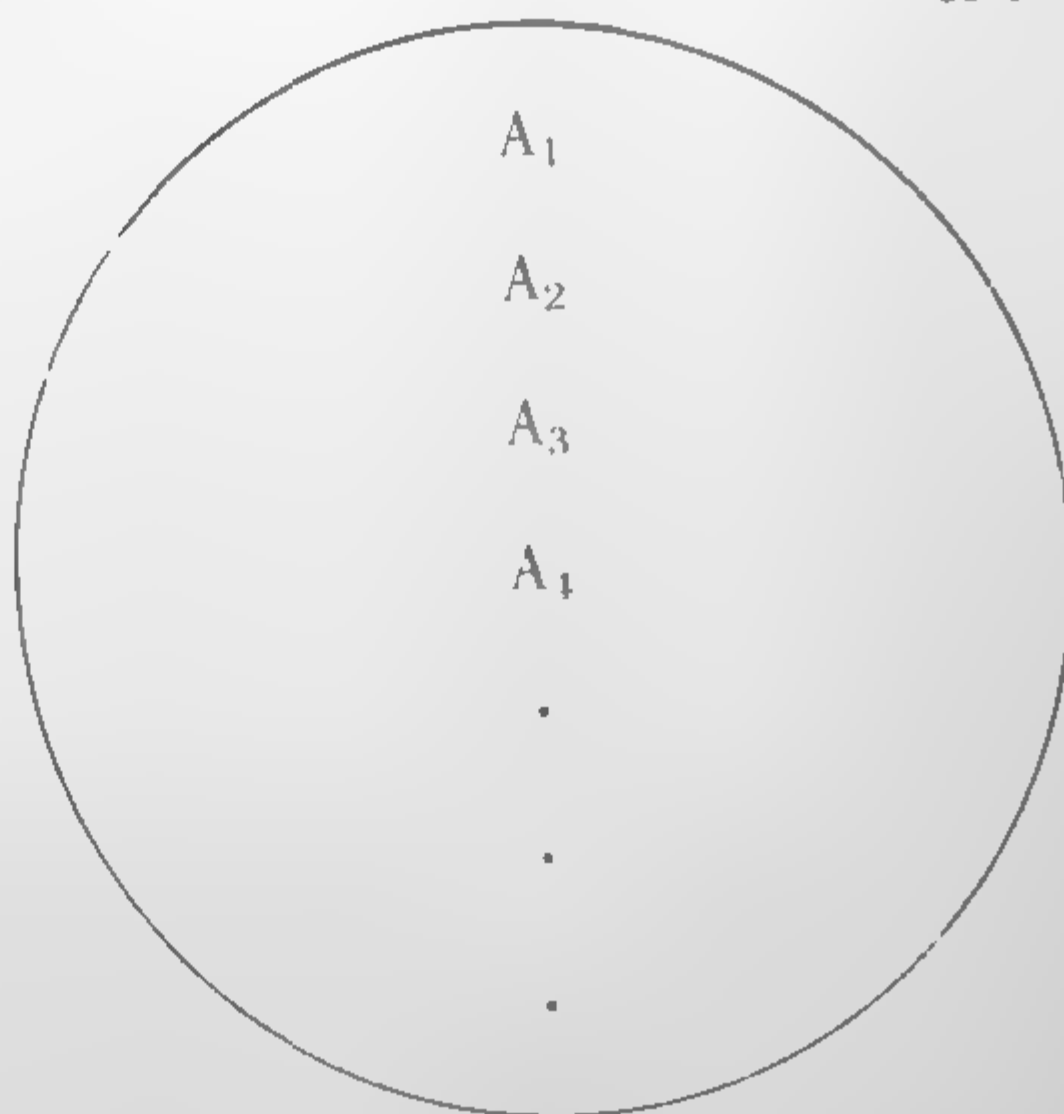


called "art." Of course, traditional crafting (painting, sculpting, and so on) are also sufficient for making art. Thus, for Weitz the concept of *art* is the disjunctive pair of criteria: a) traditional crafting and b) resembling prior-established art and being called "art." Weitz's view can be illustrated with the following diagram in which " $A_1$ ," " $A_2$ ," etc., stand for works of art and the line around them indicates that they belong to a class.

*Diagram I*

The expression "art" (or "work of art")

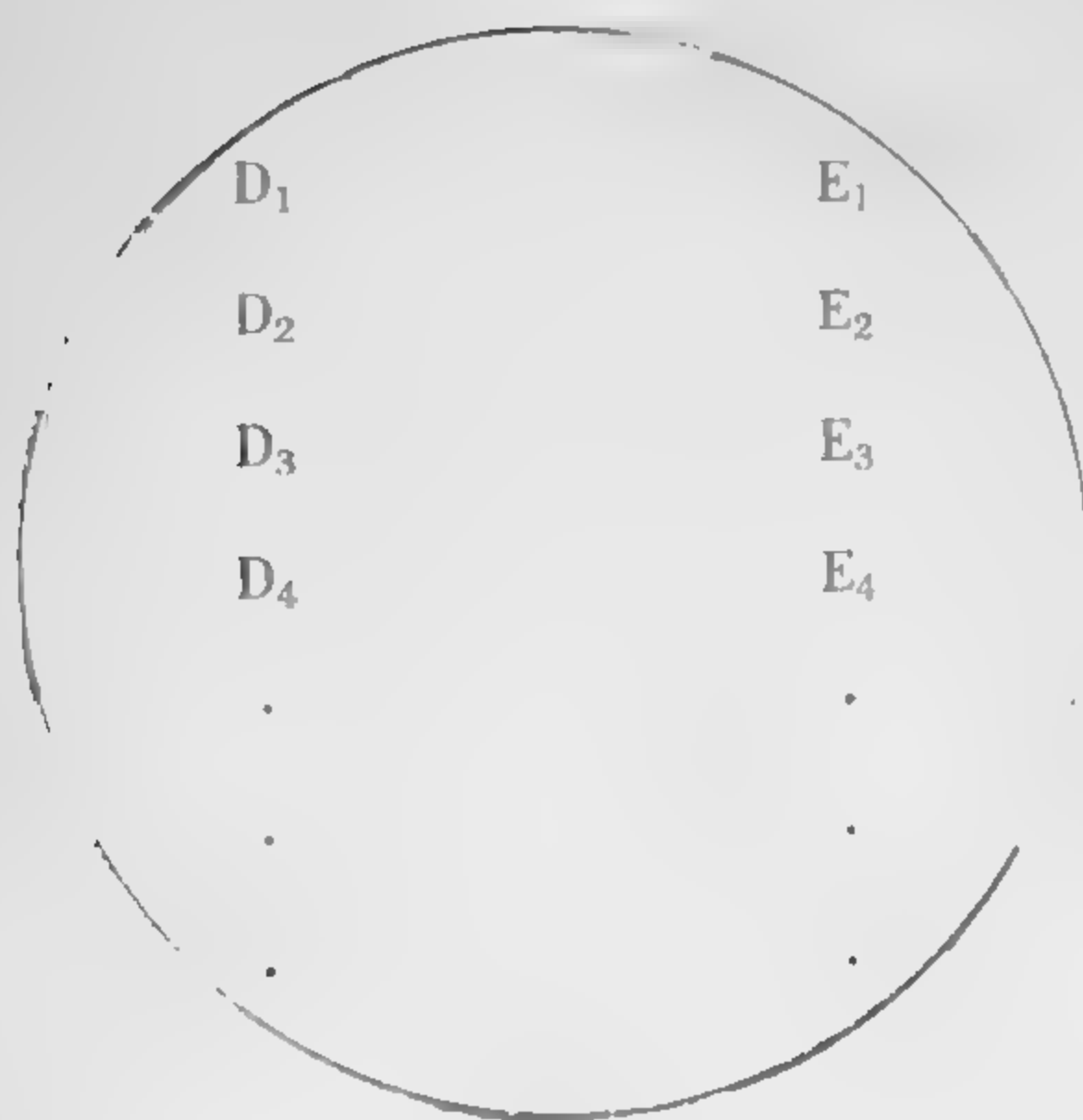
applies to objects  
in virtue of the con-  
cept of *art* which is  
the disjunction pair  
of criteria *a* and *b*.



But this account of Weitz's view is not yet complete and does not bring out everything that is implicit in his view because he distin-

guishes between a descriptive use and an evaluative use of "art." I take it that the descriptive and the evaluative uses of "art" are applicable to both traditionally crafted objects as well as the other members of the class of works of art; it is just that the descriptive use has no evaluative content. The descriptive/evaluative distinction may be represented in a diagram of the class of works of art by replacing A's with D's (works to which the descriptive use of "art" applies) and E's (works to which the evaluative use of "art" applies. The D's and E's can then be separated into two subsets.

*Diagram II*

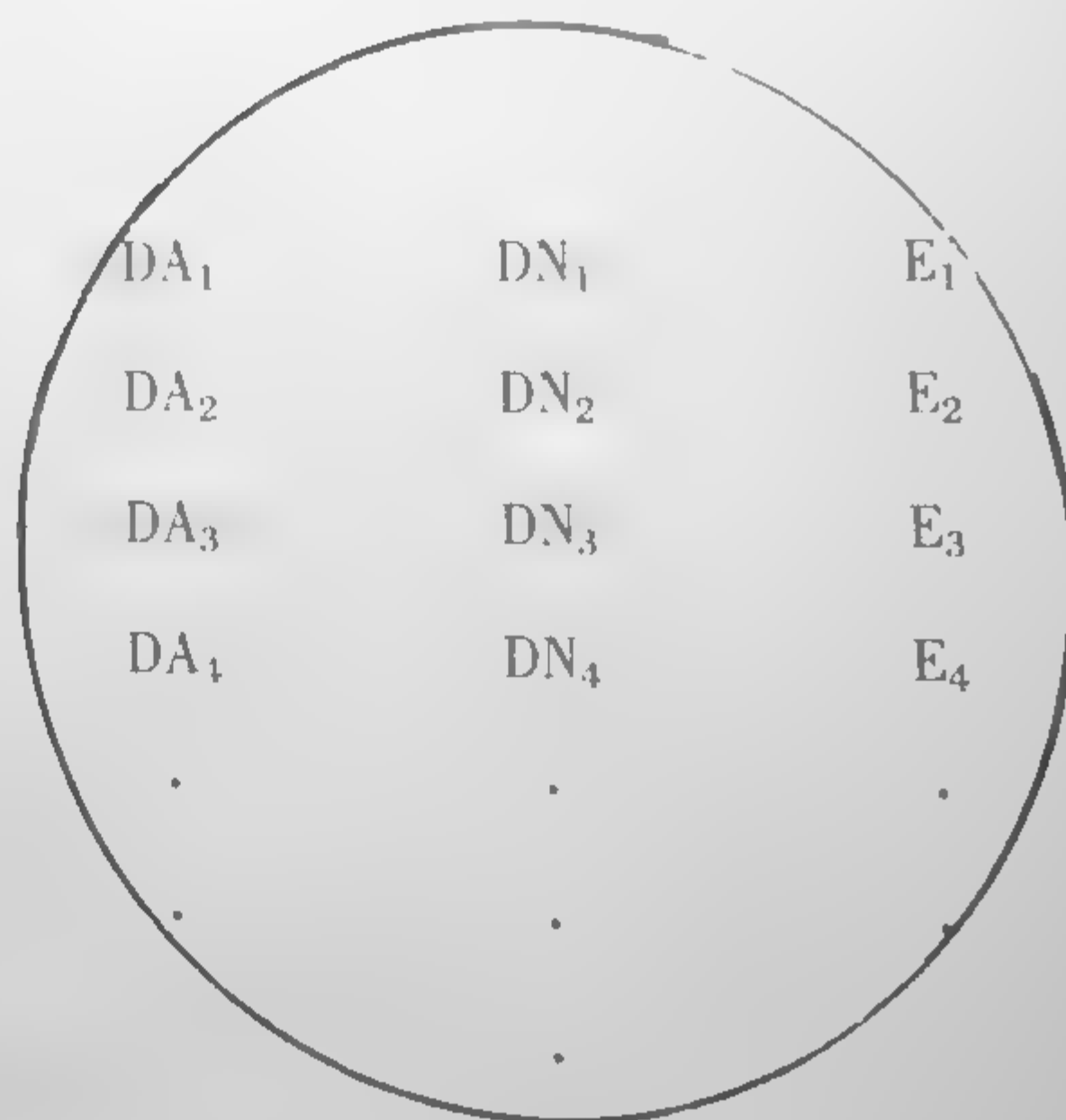


The class of works of art is now seen to have a certain structure because according to Weitz the term "art" has distinctive *uses*. Weitz's theory does not make anything of this structure. But the class of works of art has more structure than the diagrams have yet revealed because its members are admitted by a pair of disjunctive criteria: traditional craftsmanship, and resembling prior-established art and being called "art." This means that some D's are traditional crafted

works of art such as paintings and statues; I shall call these "descriptive art artifacts" or DA's for short. Some D's become art by resembling prior-established art and being called "art"; I shall call these "descriptive art nonartifacts" or DN's for short. Some descriptive art nonartifacts may be artifacts but not art artifacts because they are not crafted in traditional artistic ways. For example, a car might be a descriptive art nonartifact even though it is an artifact, because it is not crafted in traditional artistic ways. Some descriptive art nonartifacts might not be artifacts in any way. I expect that most descriptive art nonartifacts would be nonartifacts such as seashells and the like which happen to have characteristics which make them look like representations.

The descriptive use of "art" presumably involves no evaluation. The evaluative use of "art" is applicable to an object on the basis of resemblance to prior-established art which in some way is considered valuable or perhaps just because the object is thought valuable, so that whether an object to which the term is applied is crafted by traditional artistic means or not is irrelevant. Thus, one might use "art" evaluatively of a Rembrandt, a car, or a sunset. Consequently, the artifact/nonartifact distinction does not have to be used among the E's. The distinction under discussion can be represented as follows:

*Diagram III*



The class of descriptive art artifacts is identical with the class which I earlier called "artifactual art." Artifactual art also includes some E's of course, but it does so only because those E's are first descriptive art artifacts. One could divide the E's into two subclasses—representing those E's which are descriptive art artifacts and those which are descriptive art nonartifacts. One could even indicate by pairings that some artifactual art is valuable, for example—(DA<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>3</sub>). Further refinements are possible, but Diagram III is not intended to be a complete representation of the class of works of art as conceived by Weitz. Diagram III is sufficient for present purposes.

Now Weitz is quite uninterested in the structure that exists within the class of works of art. He focuses his entire attention on the fact that the members of the class do not have any interesting characteristics in common, and the conclusion he draws is that no definition of "art" or "work of art" is possible.

So far in this section of the chapter, following Weitz, I have been speaking of "the class of works of art." The class that Weitz is talking about might better be characterized as "the class of objects to which 'art' or 'work of art' can be meaningfully applied." Either expression may be applied for quite different reasons: because an object is a descriptive art artifact; because an object is a descriptive art nonartifact; or because an object is evaluative art. Putting the matter in this way enables us to see better the possibility that meaningfully applying "art" or "work of art" to an object does not necessarily mean that that object is literally a work of art. Putting the matter in this way also enables us to see better the possibility that there might be different literal senses of the expressions. It also helps us to focus on the structure within the class of objects in question. As was noted earlier, Weitz's conception does not allow for the metaphorical use of "art" or "work of art." But if we talk about the class of objects to which "art" or "work of art" applies, it makes it easier to see how some of the applications could be metaphorical.

How do the considerations of structure relate to questions of the literal and metaphorical applications of the terms? A metaphorical application in some way derives from a literal instance. The structure of the class of objects to which "art" and "work of art" applies furnishes the clue as to which applications are literal and which metaphorical. If we look at the way this class has been divided up, it is evident that the division is not an arbitrary one but one which reflects an important fact about how we understand an aspect of our world and an important linguistic parallel about our use of "art" and "work of art." Earlier it was argued that descriptive art artifacts (there called "artifactual art") have a certain kind of priority over similarity art (roughly, what I am now calling descriptive art nonartifacts) and that descriptive art artifacts constitute a core of the class of objects to

which "art" or "work of art" can be meaningfully applied. The priority and coreness of descriptive art artifacts is reflected in our usage of "art" and "work of art." On occasion when in thought or utterance we apply "art" (or "work of art") to a descriptive art artifact, we understand it to have a specific sense, and the sense is roughly "crafted in some traditional artistic way." Someone might object, "First you divide the class of objects up in a way that yields subclasses the members of which have certain things in common. Then you point out that the members of a particular subclass have in common a certain feature and take the linguistic counterpart of this feature as a sense which picks out that subclass. You built in your conclusion about a sense at the beginning." I want to maintain, however, that the division into the particular subclasses is not something that I did; it is something that one finds when one reflects carefully on our use of "art" (or "work of art") and the way in which we apply the word.

We can see how these divisions function if we reflect on *what we are doing* when we use "art" or "work of art" in different cases. Consider first the descriptive art artifact sense. Now we do not with much frequency utter "art" in the descriptive art artifact sense, although we frequently use it in our thought (by which I mean our understanding of the aspects of the world around us). When we walk into an art museum, we *recognize* that many of the objects in sight are works of art in the sense of their having been crafted in some traditional way. Occasionally we may relieve someone's puzzlement by *saying* of a pile of rocks on a museum floor, "It is a work of art." In this last case we are pointing out that the rocks have been crafted, not just dumped, although "traditional" takes further explaining in such cases. In general, what we are doing in using the descriptive art artifact sense of "art" or "work of art" is to locate a particular object within a certain framework.

Now suppose we say of a naturally occurring rock formation or a seashell either of which resembles a human face, "it is a work of art." Assuming that the term is not being used evaluatively, what we would probably be doing is bringing out or calling to someone's attention that the object in question has a resemblance to something else in somewhat the way that certain works of art (in the descriptive art artifact sense) do. Thus, although we use the same word in the cases just discussed, we use it in markedly different ways because we use it to do such different things.

Finally, suppose we say of a Rembrandt, a sunset, or a car, "It's a work of art," with emphasis on each word in the phrase "work of art" and with longer than usual time intervals before and after "of." The expression with such phrasing is characteristically used to praise. The basis for the evaluation might be different in different cases. In the case of the Rembrandt one might be saying that it is near the top



of the class of descriptive art artifacts. In the case of the sunset one might be saying that it has qualities similar to the valuable qualities of some works of art in the descriptive art artifact sense. In the case of the car one might be saying that it is beautiful in appearance (as some descriptive art artifacts are) or that it is well-made (as some descriptive art artifacts are).

Whether in the cases of the evaluative use of "art" or "work of art" and the uses which pick out descriptive art nonartifacts there are distinct senses or metaphorical uses or some combination I am not sure. One thing that is meant by there being a distinct sense of a word is that there is a stable application of that word. Whether the evaluative use of "art" or "work of art" has the required stability I am not sure. That there is a distinct sense of "art" (or "work of art") in which the term means that an object has been crafted in a traditional artistic way seems evident. A spelling out of what is involved in crafting in a traditional artistic way will, I think, reveal the specific necessary and sufficient conditions of descriptive art artifacts, but I shall not go into that until later. It suffices for present purposes to say that crafting in a traditional artistic way is necessary and sufficient for an object's being a descriptive art artifact. And the descriptive art artifact sense is basic for the other uses in that in one way or another the descriptive art nonartifact uses and the evaluative uses are parasitic upon descriptive art artifacts. To say of some object that it is art in the descriptive art nonartifact "sense" is to say that the object resembles some prior-established work of art. The prior-established work may be a descriptive art artifact or another descriptive art nonartifact, but if it is another descriptive art nonartifact, as we saw earlier, the trail must lead ultimately back to a descriptive art artifact. To say of some object that it is art in the evaluative "sense" is to say that (if it is a descriptive art artifact) it is a very good descriptive art artifact or (if it is not a descriptive art artifact) it has qualities similar to the valuable qualities of some descriptive art artifact or the like. I am not claiming of course to have mapped out all the ways in which "art" or "work of art" can be used. There are endless uses of the terms. "Work of art" can, for example, be used perjoratively: one might say, "Her dress is a work of art," in a certain tone of voice and with a raising of the eyebrows to mean that the dress is awful because it is overly elaborate.

The thesis about "art" or "work of art" for which I am arguing can perhaps be made more plausible by taking note of a distinction about different kinds of words which Paul Ziff makes in *Semantic Analysis*.<sup>6</sup> Ziff distinguishes between words which have meaning but not *a* meaning in English and words which have both meaning and *a* meaning in English. He gives as an example of a word which has meaning but not *a* (particular) meaning "tiger." "Tiger" does not have

a (particular) meaning because the word has no set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Conditions such as being striped and being four-legged which may be thought of as necessary can be missing from an individual and that individual can still be a tiger—for example, albino tigers and three-legged tigers. Ziff maintains that being feline is a necessary condition of being a tiger, but it is of course not sufficient. As an example of a word which has meaning and a (particular) meaning, he gives "brother," which in one of its senses means "male sibling." This sense of "brother" has necessary and sufficient conditions, namely, being male and being a sibling. Weitz's claim, in effect, is that "art" (or "work of art") is something like "tiger" as Ziff describes it, although not just like it because Weitz claims that there are no necessary conditions for "art." I believe that "art," like "brother" has a particular meaning in English—at least one distinct sense. I have also tried to show that this sense is basic and that the class of objects that it picks out is likewise basic.

In *Art and the Aesthetic* and elsewhere I maintained that the artifacts which are art become so in two distinct ways: by being made (painted, sculpted, composed, and the like) or by having artifactuality conferred on them. I maintained that art such as the *Night Watch* is made, but that some works of art had artifactuality conferred on them. This second notion was an attempt to show how things such as unaltered driftwood hung on walls and the urinal Duchamp used fall within the limits of artifactuality of artists. I now believe it was a mistake to think that artifactuality can be conferred; it just is not the sort of thing that can be conferred: an artifact must be made in some way. My mistake was caused, at least in part, by my confounding two quite different things. I wrote of natural objects which become works of art although they are unaltered: "one way in which this might happen would be for someone to pick up a natural object, take it home, and hang it on the wall . . . Natural objects which become works of art in the classificatory sense are artifactualized without the use of tools—artifactuality is conferred on the object rather than worked on it."<sup>10</sup> I wrote of picking up and hanging on a wall and of conferring artifactuality as if they were one and the same thing; that is, I thought of picking up and hanging on a wall as a way of conferring artifactuality. But while conferring artifactuality is impossible (as it now seems), picking up and hanging on a wall is quite easy to do. Picking up and hanging and similar actions are ways of *achieving* (not conferring) artifactuality. Of course, it is not just the motion of lifting and affixing or the like which makes something an artifact, it is lifting and affixing or the like plus something else.

How are we to understand these actions which produce artifacts but which are not straightforward cases of making? Consider a series of cases in which a piece of driftwood plays a central role. In the first

case one picks up a piece of driftwood and moves it to another part of the beach merely to get it out of the way. In this case there is no inclination to think that the driftwood has become an artifact, it has just been moved from one place to another. In the second case one picks up a piece of driftwood and with a knife whittles a handle on one end and a point on the other with the intention of using it to spear flounders in the surf. In this case we have a clear case of an artifact, although a crude one; it is an object which has been altered (carved) to suit it to serve a purpose. It is an artifact, of course, even if it is never actually used as a spear or used in any way at all. This second case obviously satisfies the dictionary definition of "artifact": "An object made by man, especially with a view to subsequent use." In the first case, there is nothing in any sense which is made.

Now let us consider some cases which, so to speak, fall in between the first case and the second case. In considering these cases, the test will be to see if there is any sense in which something is made. Suppose one picks up a piece of driftwood and without altering it in any way digs a hole in the sand or brandishes it at a threatening dog. The driftwood has been *made* into a tool or a weapon by the use to which it is put. These cases differ from the driftwood-spear case in that the tool or weapon is not made prior to an intended use and the piece of wood is not altered in any way. But what exactly has been made if the piece of driftwood has not been altered? In the driftwood-spear case what is made is the complex object: the wood carved in a certain way for use as a spear. In the other two cases what has been made are also complex objects: the wood used as a digging tool and the wood used as a weapon. In neither case is the driftwood alone the artifact; the artifact is the driftwood manipulated and used in a certain way. For the purposes of the immediate discussion the driftwood alone (unaltered and unused) is a *simple* object and the driftwood altered or used is a *complex* object. The complex objects are complex because their original (simple) objects have undergone a change at the hands of an agent.<sup>1</sup> When anthropologists speak of unaltered stones found in conjunction with human or human-like fossils as artifacts, they have in mind the same notion of complex objects made by simple-objects-used which I have been discussing.<sup>2</sup>

Now suppose a piece of driftwood is picked up by someone who is familiar with the world of art and taken home and hung on a wall, unaltered, with the intention to display its characteristics as the characteristics of a painting are displayed. The driftwood is being used as an artistic medium and being displayed within the context of the artworld, and it thereby becomes part of a more complex object. The complex object—the-driftwood-used-as-an-artistic-medium—is an artifact of an artworld system. If a piece of driftwood were picked up and hung on a wall without any artistic context and just to get it out of

the way (the wall being a convenient place to put it), there would be no reason to think that an artifact had been made; the driftwood would not have become part of a more complex object. The urinal Duchamp used to make *Fountain* is like the driftwood used as an artistic medium; it became an artifact of an artworld system. *Fountain* is the urinal used as it is, as an artistic medium. In saying that the driftwood and the urinal are used as an artistic medium, I am saying that they are used as pigments, marble, and the like are used when more conventional works of art are made. The urinal, unlike the driftwood, was of course an artifact to begin with, but at the beginning it was not Duchamp's artifact (of Duchamp's making). But Duchamp's use of the plumbing fixture within the artworld also made it into an artifact of that system. *Fountain* is thus a double artifact; it is an artifact of the artworld which is made from an artifact of the plumbing trade. Such a double artifact is not of course at all unusual; a painting is made of pigments which in turn are manufactured.

At the beginning of the paper I mentioned Dali's alleged claim that some rocks were art because he had pointed at them and said they were art. Is "pointing and calling" sufficient to make the rocks into artifactual art or are they simply similarity art? Are the rocks an object with which the philosopher of art must contend, i.e., an object such as the *Night Watch* or *Fountain*, or can the rocks be ignored? Put otherwise, is "pointing and calling" sufficient to create an artifact of the artworld? There does not seem to be any sense in which something is *made* by "pointing and calling." The rocks are not altered in any way by the "pointing and calling." Nor are the rocks used in any way similar to the way in which driftwood may be used to dig a hole in the sand or the like or the way in which Duchamp used the famous urinal. In the cases such as the unaltered driftwood digging tool and *Fountain* we seem to have come to the limit of artifactuality; the driftwood and *Fountain* are just barely artifacts. Between *Fountain* and the rocks Dali pointed at there is a gap, the gap which marks the dividing line between artifact and nonartifact.

In this chapter I have attempted to show that artifactuality is a necessary condition of art, or at the very least that it is a necessary condition of the art in which philosophers of art are interested. I have also made some attempt to clarify the notion of what it is to be an artifact. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, however, the institutional theory of art is not alone in holding to the necessity of artifactuality; this is the traditional view. More now needs to be said to distinguish the institutional theory from traditional theories of art. Specifically, what now needs to be shown is the institutional nature of art.







#### Chapter IV    *The Institutional Nature of Art*

Monroe Beardsley's incisive attack on the institutional theory provides a good point of departure for a discussion of the institutional nature of art.<sup>1</sup> Beardsley proposes as a contrast with the institutional conception of art and artist what he calls the "Romantic" conception of the artist—an artist working and producing art in isolation from any institutions. Of course, he does not think all artists work in such isolation, but if even one could Beardsley thinks that the institutional conception of art must be false. Beardsley characterizes the Romantic artist as follows.

*Withdrawn into his ivory tower, shunning all contact with the business, governmental, educational, and other institutions of his society . . . he works away on his canvas, carves his stone, polishes the rhymes and meters of his precious lyric. . . . Of course, we cannot deny that the Romantic artist may be supplied electricity by an institution, that his paper or canvas has to be manufactured, that his very thoughts will be . . . to some extent 'moulded' by his acquired language and previous acculturation. But that is all beside the point, which is (on this account) that he can make a work of art, and validate it as such, by his own free originative power. And it is this claim that has in recent years been explicitly challenged by those who hold that art is . . . essentially institutional.'*

In a way, what I shall want to argue against Beardsley is that although an artist can withdraw from contact with various of the institutions of

society, he cannot withdraw *from* the institution of art because he carries it with him as Robinson Crusoe carried his Englishness with him throughout his stay on the island.

Beardsley does not argue in favor of the Romantic conception of art, rather he argues against several particular versions of the institutional view, finding them all inadequate. Consequently, everything Beardsley says may be true and the Romantic view false if an as yet unformulated version of the institutional theory or some other non-Romantic view is true.

Beardsley begins his attack on institutional theories by formulating two principles, either of which, he claims, states a sufficient condition for art's being essentially institutional.

- 1) *If the existence of some institution is included among the truth-conditions of "A is an artwork" then artworks are essentially institutional objects.*
- 2) *If the existence of some institution is included among the truth-conditions of "this artwork has property P," where P is a normal property of artworks, then artworks are essentially institutional objects.<sup>3</sup>*

Beardsley takes the second principle to apply to views such as the following: works of art belong to genres and belonging to a genre is an institutional property, hence, works of art are institutional. I shall ignore this principle and claims associated with it, because it does not concern the really basic issue of the institutionality of art.

Beardsley takes the first principle to be the principle of an institutional theory such as mine. There are several problems with Beardsley's claim. First, the name "A" in the antecedent of the first principle is ambiguous; it could refer to some particular object or to all the members of the class of artworks. It must be understood in the latter way, otherwise it lacks the generality to support the consequent which has the form of a universal generalization. I assume that Beardsley wishes "A" to be understood in this general way. Second, he has formulated the first principle in terms of a *sufficient* condition only, but my theory claims that institutionality is both necessary and sufficient. He states the first principle in this weaker form, presumably, because he wants to formulate two principles each of which is sufficient *and* because if institutionality could be shown not to be a sufficient, this would show it not to be necessary *and* sufficient. But

even if Beardsley were to show that the first principle is false he would not have shown that institutionality is not a necessary condition of art. And, of course, he would have to show that institutionality is not necessary in order to show that the Romantic view is true. As noted earlier, Beardsley does not argue in a positive way for the Romantic view. Furthermore, he does not attempt to show that institutionality as such is not sufficient, but that particular theoretical accounts of institutionality have not been shown to be sufficient. Consequently, even if everything Beardsley says is true, he will not have shown that institutionality in some form is not sufficient.

In what follows I shall first note and accept some of the criticisms Beardsley makes of my theory, thus amending my conception of the institutional nature of art. Second, I shall focus on Beardsley's conception of the Romantic artist in order to use it as a foil in developing an account of the institutional nature of art.

Before beginning a discussion of the notion of the Romantic artist, it will be useful to consider a very important point which Beardsley makes. He distinguishes between what he calls "institution-types" and "institution-tokens." By "institution-type" he means a practice such as tool-making, storytelling, marriage, or the like. By "institution-token" he means an organization such as General Motors, Columbia Pictures, the Roman Catholic Church, or the like. Institution-tokens execute the kind of activities specified under institution-types. Of course some institution-types (practices) can exist without institution-tokens (organizations).

Beardsley uses the institution-type institution-token distinction to criticize an aspect of my theory. He cites the definition of "work of art" from *Art and the Aesthetic*; it runs as follows: "A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld)." Beardsley raises a number of questions about various elements of the definition, but at the moment I am concerned with only one. He notes that I characterize the institution of the artworld as an "established practice" which in his terminology makes it an institution-type. He points out that the definition contains expressions such as "conferred," "status," and "acting on behalf of" which typically have application within institution-tokens (the University of Illinois, the United States government, and the like). The difficulty as Beardsley sees it is that the artworld as I have conceived it is not an institution-token but a practice. Beardsley queries, "... does it make sense to speak of acting on behalf of a *practice*? Status-awarding authority can center in an institution-token, but practices, as such, seem to lack the requisite source of authority. Perhaps the artworld, as Dickie conceives it, could not confer status."

Beardsley is, I think, completely right on this point. The formu-

lation of the institutional theory which I have given is not coherent. The expressions in question from the definition are much too formal and appropriate only for groups of the kind Beardsley calls institution-tokens. These expressions led me to give inaccurate descriptions of the artworld and some of its functions. For example, I attempted to give accounts of how the conferring of the status of candidate for appreciation occurs in the artworld. It now seems clear that the activity of creating art does not involve conferring. If, however, the institutional theory as I formulated it earlier is not correct, it does not follow that some institutional theory cannot be formulated which is correct, nor does it follow that the Romantic view of art is true. Stated very generally and without elaboration, what I now mean by the institutional approach is the view that a work of art is art because of the position it occupies within a cultural practice, which is of course in Beardsley's terminology an institution-type.

Jeffrey Wieand has refined and extended Beardsley's remarks on institutions by distinguishing between Action-institutions and Person-institutions." Action-institutions are types of acts such as promising and the like. These kinds of actions are governed by rules which those who participate in the activity understand. The tokens of an Action-institution are the particular performances of that type of action. Person-institutions are organizations which behave as quasi-persons or agents, as, for example, the Catholic Church and General Motors do. Typically, selected members of the organization act on behalf of it. Person-institutions can participate in Action-institutions, as when an organization promises to do something. Given Wieand's refinements, I now want to say that art-making is an Action-institution and does not involve any Person-institution in any essential way. Of course, many Person-institutions—museums, foundations, churches, and the like—have relations with art-making, but no particular Person-institution is essential to art-making.

Now that Beardsley's and Wieand's criticism has been accepted, let me return to Beardsley's Romantic conception of art and artist, which he takes to be the antithesis of the institutional view. A discussion of the Romantic view will be useful in stating the institutional view in more detail and making it plausible. Of course, Beardsley's description of the Romantic artist was stated with my earlier formulation of the institutional theory in mind, but this fact does not affect the conflict between the Romantic conception and the general institutional point of view. But what exactly do the two points of view disagree about? Beardsley is quite right that the fact that society supplies an artist electricity, canvas, paper, or the like is irrelevant to whether his art is Romantic or institutional in nature. But Beardsley also lumps in with these irrelevancies the fact that an artist's "... very thoughts will be . . . to some extent 'moulded' by his



acquired language and previous acculturation." In this quickly passed-over idea about the molding of thoughts lies buried the issue which divides the Romantic and institutional theories. Being supplied some kinds of thoughts by one's society can be like being supplied electricity or canvas, but being supplied other kinds of thoughts is very different. The similarities and differences bear looking into.

If Beardsley is talking about the molding by the cultural environment of thoughts about, say, social justice, racial attitudes, sexual mores, governmental actions, human affection, and the like (the sorts of things which can be the subject matter of art), then the fact that an artist has such culturally derived thoughts when he creates art is irrelevant to whether his art is essentially institutional. And I do not think that anyone would have supposed that these kinds of thoughts are relevant. If, however, the culturally derived thoughts that an artist will have are not merely thoughts about subject matters of art but are thoughts about *art itself*, then things are different and there is good reason to think that the art he creates is essentially institutional. Of course, not every thought about something which is a work of art is relevant here. For example, a kind of thought about art I am *not* talking about here involves thoughts of objects which although in fact works of art are not known to the person having the thoughts to be works of art. A person's remembering or reflecting on an ancient artifact which he does not realize is a work of art is a case of a thought about art in one sense, but it is not a relevant case. A person's seeing and then thinking about *Fountain* in any way without knowing that it is a work of art is another example of a thought about art which is not a relevant case. Relevant thoughts about art are thoughts about objects which a person who has the thoughts knows to be art, thoughts about the activity of producing art, and the like. In short, relevant thoughts are thoughts that involve an understanding in some degree of the concept of art; they are, as noted just above, thoughts about *art itself*. If artists create works of art at least in part because of the thoughts of the relevant kind about art that they have derived from their language and acculturation, then a possibility is opened up that the existence of something which might be called the institution of art is a condition for their works being works of art.

The question now naturally arises: 1) how do the relevant thoughts about art function in an artist's experience and 2) what does it mean to say that these thoughts about art involve something which might be called the institution of art? In answering the first question it must be said that thoughts about art function in two ways. At one end of the range they might take the form of *conscious* thoughts about art itself as is no doubt frequently the case when dadaists, creators of happenings, and the like do their work. At this same end of the range are those who create art of a traditional kind and who at some time

during the creative process consciously view their work as falling under the category of art. At the other end of the range the thoughts about art are never consciously in mind at any time during the creative process, but the artists create what they do as a result of their previous exposure to examples of art, training in artistic techniques, or general background knowledge of art. The first question has now been answered; thoughts about art may function consciously or unconsciously, just as thoughts do in countless other domains. In answer to the second question it may be said that thoughts about art involve something which might be called the institution of art because the artists described employ those thoughts consciously or unconsciously as a framework within which they work. At the close of this chapter and in the next chapter I shall attempt to explain in more detail the nature of the framework.

Can art be created outside the kind of framework I have suggested? I believe that Beardsley thinks it can be and that this is the point of his notion of the Romantic artist. His description of the Romantic artist as he has put it, however, it is not an effective contrast to the institutional view because it is not clear what Beardsley means by saying that an artist's very thoughts will be to some extent molded by his acquired language and previous acculturation. Drawing now on what was just said about thoughts about art, his notion of the Romantic artist can be made to be an effective contrast by understanding the Romantic artist's "free originaive power" to create works of art to be an ability to create works of art independently of the framework within which artists work, the framework which is typically acquired by having experienced examples of art, having had training in artistic techniques, having been given a background knowledge of art, and the like. Having sharpened up the conception of the Romantic artist, it is very difficult to imagine such a being existing in the world today. How could anyone over the age of two or three years escape knowledge of the basic elements of the framework? Grandma Moses and such primitive painters do not qualify as Romantic artists. They are not people totally ignorant of art; they are people who have a basic understanding of art, although they may be ignorant of many art techniques and the latest doings in advanced art circles. Thus, at the very least the occurrence of a Romantic artist seems highly implausible. Even so, despite the implausibility of such an event, it may seem logically possible that a Romantic artist could spring up. One can imagine a member of a primitive tribe which has no conception of art or a member of our own society who is so culturally isolated as to be completely ignorant of art. One can conceive of either of these individuals suddenly having and employing the kind of framework I have been discussing and as a result making a work of art with whatever materials are at hand. This thought experiment, how-

ever, obviously does not show that a work of art can be created independently of the framework being sketched, for it pictures art being created within the context of an art-specific framework. What this thought experiment *does show* is that it is logically possible for art together with its framework to have a Romantic occurrence. I have now distinguished between two things both of which Beardsley's view supports: 1) the occurrence of a Romantic artist and 2) the Romantic occurrence of the institution of art. That something of the magnitude of a full-blown institution will occur spontaneously is quite implausible. The present concern, however, is not with whether it is logically possible for the whole institution of art to spring into existence, it is the question of whether art can be created independently of a framework, i.e., whether there can be an occurrence of a Romantic artist. The question is whether one can create a work of art simply by the exercise of one's, to use Beardsley's phrase, "own free originaive power." Beardsley's notion of a Romantic artist, as I have interpreted it, holds open the possibility that art-making in at least some cases could be totally a product of individual initiative, a process which could occur in a cultural vacuum. Suppose that a person totally ignorant of the concept of art (the member of a primitive tribe or the culturally isolated individual mentioned above, for example) and unacquainted with any representations were to fashion a representation of something out of clay. Without trying to diminish the significance of the creation of an unprecedented representation, such a creation would not be a work of art. While the creator of the representation would certainly recognize the object as a representation, he would not have any cognitive structures into which he could fit it so as to understand it as art. Someone might make the mistake of identifying art with representation (a deeply ingrained identification) and thereby conclude that the representation is art. Once this temptation is put aside, we can see that the creator of the representation cannot recognize his creation as art and that, therefore, it cannot be art. This case should not be confused with the case discussed earlier of the artist who creates art without consciously having a thought that he is creating art, for such a person could have the relevant thought. In the case in question, the person who creates the representation could not have the relevant thought or thoughts because he lacks the relevant cognitive structures. Art cannot exist in the contextless vacuum that Beardsley's view requires: it must exist in a cultural matrix, as the product of someone fulfilling a cultural role.

It seems inconceivable then that there could ever have been a Romantic artist or that there could ever be one in the future. Now, although a Romantic artist, i.e., someone creating art without a framework, seems inconceivable, someone might think, however, that the institution of art itself must have had a "Romantic" beginning, for

otherwise it could never have gotten started. The implausibility of the institution of art springing into existence with its inventor functioning as a Promethean art-giver (with framework thrown in) is something of an embarrassment to the Romantic explanation of art and its origins. Moreover, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that art did not have the instantaneous beginning that the Romantic-origin thesis requires. Art may have emerged (and no doubt did emerge) in an evolutionary way out of the techniques originally associated with religious, magical, or other activities. In the beginning these techniques would have been no doubt minimal and their products (diagrams, chants, and the like) crude and in themselves uninteresting. With the passage of time the techniques would have become more polished and specialists have come to exist and their products would have come to have characteristics of some interest (to their creators and others) over and above the interest they had as elements in the religious or whatever other kind of activity in which they were embedded. At about this point it becomes meaningful to say that primitive art had begun to exist, although the people who had the art might not yet have had a word for its art.

To give a possible account of the beginnings of art which does not have a role for a Romantic origin does not of course show that there was in fact no Romantic origin(s). The implausibility, however, of some untutored person suddenly having and employing the kind of framework I have been discussing and thereby creating the institution of art at a single stroke just seems like too much to swallow. I want to emphasize again that the question of the Romantic origin of the institution of art is not the main issue which divides Beardsley and me. The fundamental issue is whether there could be a Romantic artist, i.e., a person who creates art independently of a framework.

There is, however, something about Beardsley's notion of the Romantic origin of the institution of art which should be taken account of. The Romantic originator as I have depicted him is a rather complex individual, and it is this complexity which makes his existence implausible. It is more plausible to think of what might be called Romantic proto-artists, i.e., persons whose actions initiate practices which over a period of time develop into something recognizable as an institution of art. I have in mind such actions as the use of a pigment to color a traditional object or a traditional representation, an action which enhances the object or representation. The sort of actions I am envisaging can be identified with "the polishing of techniques" and "the development of specialists" which I spoke of earlier. The cumulative effect of such acts of individual initiative in certain circumstances might ultimately be the creation of an institution of art. The kernel of truth in Beardsley's conception of a Roman-

tic originator can thus be incorporated into the institutional view without swallowing the whole conception.

It is possible, perhaps even probable, that Beardsley really intends "Romantic artist" to refer to the kind of individual I have just called "Romantic proto-artist." Understood in this way, a Romantic artist would be an individual who contrives an object because he likes one or more of its characteristics: representative, expressive, aesthetic, for example. According to Beardsley, the object so created would be a work of art. Beardsley's view would be, on this interpretation, that the first artifact which initiated the particular chain of events which resulted in an artworld system is itself a work of art. Now, I said earlier that the action of an individual such as Beardsley here conceives no doubt lies at the beginning of the development which resulted in a system within which works of art are created. The institutional view, however, is that it is further along in the chain of events envisaged that it becomes reasonable to say that there are works of art, namely, at a time when roles have become established with regard to the creation and "consumption" of such artifacts.

Having now attempted to deal with the challenge presented by the theory of the Romantic artist, I must face a radically different kind of opposition in Timothy Binkley's conception of art—a view which up to a certain point takes an institutional-like approach.

Binkley begins "Deciding About Art" by asserting that, as Duchamp demonstrated, ". . . in order to 'create' a work of art it is necessary only to *specify* what the artwork is." Near the end of his article he makes the following statement which he insists is not a definition but ". . . a description of the current state of artistic institutions": "A work of art is a piece specified within artistic indexing conventions."<sup>9</sup> With his specification version of an institutional-like theory of art in hand, he proceeds to attack all traditional definitions of "art" at a stroke. His argument is that for every traditional definition of "art" there will be something which the definition excludes as not art. Binkley then *specifies* that the something which a traditional theory says is not art is a work of art. He claims that any traditional theory is thereby refuted.

My institutional theory of art, however, Binkley says is not defeated by this argument.<sup>10</sup> He has, nevertheless, a number of other arguments to direct against my view. As many others have done, Binkley attacks my notion of conferred artifactuality as inadequate. As I have already conceded on this point and his remarks raise no new questions, I will not comment on this matter. He also objects that the institutional theory is wrong in incorporating the notion of "candidacy for appreciation" into the definition of "art." I think Binkley is right that candidacy for appreciation does not have a place in the



definition of "work of art," but I shall not address this question until Chapter VI.

Binkley has a third objection to my version of the institutional theory. As noted, he agrees with the general institutional approach that something is art because of the place it occupies in the artworld, but he questions whether the "... notion of status conferral accurately designates how something achieves a place in the index of artworks."<sup>11</sup> I did not intend to claim, as this quotation would have it, that arthood itself is a conferred status but rather that a set of the aspects of an artifact (an artwork) is what has status conferred on it. The status that was supposedly conferred was candidacy for appreciation, not arthood. Unfortunately, several passages in my book give the impression that I thought that it is the status of art which is conferred. My intent was to claim that two conditions are required for art: 1) artifactuality and 2) status of candidacy for appreciation having been conferred on some aspects of the artifact by a member of the artworld. My claim was that status conferral is involved in artmaking, but that it is only part of the story. According to my earlier view, arthood was achieved as the result of two actions occurring within the context of the artworld: creating an artifact plus an act of conferral. In those cases in which "conferred artifactuality" was supposedly involved, according to the earlier view, arthood was allegedly achieved as the result of two different acts of conferral within the artworld context.

Binkley's basic criticism amounts to asking if the notion of conferral of status of art is different from the notion of specifying the status of art. For him specifying is the correct account of artmaking, and if conferral is different it is wrong. The two are different, he maintains, and therefore conferral is not the correct account of artmaking. Binkley offers some other acute criticisms of artmaking as status conferral, but since I did not claim that artmaking is a kind of status conferral, these criticisms are misdirected. In any event, I have already conceded in my discussion of Beardsley's article that the notion of status conferral does not play any kind of role in the creation of art. What remains to be seen is whether Binkley's specification version of the institutional view is adequate.

What exactly is it to specify something as art? Binkley writes that "Success at specifying is not a question of whether you're an artist, but rather of whether you know and can use existing specifying conventions, or else can establish new ones."<sup>12</sup> This remark tells us that specifying art involves the use of some convention or other. What are these conventions? An example he gives involves the actions of a traditional artist: "The mere fact that he used the artistic convention of painting on canvas assured that what he specified as the piece would be art."<sup>13</sup> In the event that it is not clear from this passage, the

artistic convention of painting on canvas is identical with specifying art. Painting on canvas is one way of specifying as art; one can presumably also specify as art by painting on wood, chiseling on stone, and in a host of other ways. In addition to the traditional conventions of the kind listed in which a person performs an action with some materials, there is, according to Binkley, what I shall call "simple specification." Simple specification occurred, according to Binkley, when Robert Barry made a work of art by saying (specifying) that it is "all the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking—1:36 P.M.; 15 June 1969, New York." Thus, according to Binkley, all the things that Robert Barry knew but was not thinking of at the specified time became a work of art. I believe that Binkley also thinks that simple specification was used when Duchamp made *Fountain*. At the end of his article Binkley claims to make everything in the universe art by simple specification, thereby eliminating the problem of keeping track of which things in the universe are and which are not art. (Simple specification should not be confused with the specification which architects make or which sculptors sometimes make for works which others are to fabricate, or the like. This latter specification can be part of a process which produces a work of art, but simple specification is supposed to produce a work of art all by itself.)

That works of art are made by painting on canvas, chiseling on stone, and the like does not, I suppose, need defending, although there must be more to the story than that. One can, for example, paint on a canvas and not create a work of art, as when someone hired merely to prime canvases paints on a canvas. Binkley tells us that painting on a canvas *done as a convention* results in a work of art. But what exactly is involved in the convention? He mentions that cultural tradition and something's being intended for "artistic consumption" are involved, but that is all he says.<sup>14</sup> One wants to be told more, especially when simple specification is involved and the use of convention is all that is involved in artmaking.

Since we are not told more of the convention(s) used in artmaking, it will be useful to focus attention on Binkley's justification for saying that the Robert Barry "piece" and things of that type (which Binkley calls "Conceptual Art") are works of art. Binkley writes

*. . . I don't know what to say except that they are made (created, realized, or whatever) by people considered artists, they are treated by critics as art, they are talked about in books and journals having to do with art, they are exhibited in or otherwise connected with art galleries, and so on. Conceptual art, like all art, is situated within a cultural*

*tradition out of which it has developed. . . . The same critics who write about Picasso and Manet write about Duchamp and Barry.*<sup>15</sup>

The first thing to note about this justification is that Binkley treats Duchamp's *Fountain* and Barry's "piece" as if they were of exactly the same type. They are, however, quite different: *Fountain*, to begin with, is a work of *visual* art (although I am not saying that what meets the eye is all there is to it) and Barry's "piece" is not.

Barry's piece is not even a kind of art in the way that *The Wasteland* is a poem or *War and Peace* is a novel either; it is, if Binkley is right, art which has transcended the need for a medium and, therefore, cannot be art of any particular kind. The *Mona Lisa* was crafted with paint and canvas as its media, *The Wasteland* and *War and Peace* with pen, ink, and words, and *Fountain* with a urinal used as an artistic medium. Barry's "piece," however, has no medium; it was not crafted with anything, it was just specified. The fact that Barry's "piece" is not physical is of no significance here, Binkley's "piece" which is the universe is certainly physical; it is just that neither *Thoughts* or *Universe* (if I may give them titles) can be said to have been crafted, as were the *Mona Lisa* and *Fountain* (although the crafting involved in creating *Fountain* is at an absolute minimum). *Fountain* is thus not, as Binkley thinks, a case of conceptual art, if conceptual art is art made by simple specification. Also, *Fountain* is an artifact of Duchamp's making, but *Thoughts* and *Universe* are not artifacts of anyone. This division puts *Fountain* on the side of the *Mona Lisa*, *The Wasteland*, and *War and Peace*, and thereby highlights important differences. We are still left with the question of how simple specification is supposed to create art.

Binkley's argument for Barry's *Thoughts* and its ilk being art, as we have seen, is that they are created by recognized artists, treated by critics as art, written about in art journals, and, finally, that they have developed out of a cultural tradition. Binkley is of course right when he says that a philosopher in constructing a philosophy of art should look to the actual practices of artists, the sayings of critics, and so on. It does not follow from this, however, that a philosopher must take seriously *everything* that the denizens of the artworld do; one may have to look beneath the surface of things a bit to find out what is really going on. First, not everything created by an artist (or a plumber) is necessarily a work of art (or a piece of plumbing). Similarly, just because something is treated as a thing of a certain type (art) by someone (art critics) does not necessarily mean that something is a thing of that kind. Binkley would perhaps agree with

these remarks, but he would, I think, also reply that an artist working within the cultural tradition he is talking about can create art by simple specification because the artist intends to do so. Creating art by simple specification thus seems to come down to having an intention to make art plus saying that something is art. Is intending to do something and saying that it is accomplished enough to accomplish that thing? Sometimes it is, as Austin has taught us, as when, given certain antecedent conditions, the minister pronounces a couple husband and wife. But is the cultural tradition of making art so similar to the cultural tradition of making matrimony? Making art has had at its center working with a medium. Learning to be an artist has meant learning to work in some medium or other—paint, stone, words, tones. For hundreds of years thousands of people have been learning to use a medium and thereby to create art. Then one day Duchamp used a urinal as a medium in somewhat the way in which a sculptor uses a piece of stone and manages (just barely) to make a work of art. A new and surprising medium was thereby added to the arsenal of artists. Barry and others, impressed with Duchamp's feat, seem to have decided that if Duchamp can create art by working with such a medium as a urinal, they can create art with no medium at all. It will not do, I think, to say that Barry's unthought knowledge is his medium. Barry does not work his unthought knowledge nor does Binkley the universe, they just *refer* to these things in an unusual way. Duchamp at least caused the urinal to change place and to be displayed within the artworld framework. Duchamp did not do much by way of applied skill, but he at least did something with something. Barry and Binkley merely make a reference to something. Duchamp's and Barry's actions are similar in certain ways, but they are basically of an entirely different sort: Duchamp's action is an act of making, while Barry's is just an act of pointing at something. The gap which divides the two actions marks the difference between making art and just saying one is making art. Duchamp manages to remain within the cultural tradition which Binkley speaks of, but Barry in trying to (or pretending to) perpetuate that cultural tradition passed out of it completely. Some will no doubt wish to claim that with *Thoughts* Barry is trying to extend and succeeds in extending the cultural tradition in somewhat the way it was expanded when another actor was added to the Greek drama or when artists began to use acrylic paints. But what in the tradition is being extended by *Thoughts*? No new medium is being introduced or altered; in fact, Barry here abandons all media. (Incidentally, I am not drawing any conclusions about any of Barry's activities except *Thoughts*).

Binkley criticizes my ill-fated notion of conferred artifactuality by asking if christening is enough to make something into an artifact.

He thinks it is obvious that christening is not enough, and I think he is right.<sup>16</sup> It is also obvious that referring to something with whatever intention does not turn that thing into a work of art.

At this point it will be useful to take stock of the conclusions reached thus far in this chapter. Beardsley's notion of a Romantic artist, when its implications are made clear, has been seen to involve substantial difficulties. The failure of the Romantic artist approach shows that artists produce art only as a result of having experienced examples of art (knowing what they were), having been trained in artistic techniques, having a background knowledge of art, or something of the sort. In short, artists produce art as a result of being enmeshed in a complex historically developed framework. It is this sort of framework, I think, that Binkley has in mind when he speaks of cultural tradition and artmaking conventions. Binkley is, therefore, headed generally in the right direction. His version of the institutional view, however, involves several difficulties: 1) he thinks that artifactuality is not necessary for works of art, i.e., that simple specification is sufficient for creating art and 2) he explains virtually nothing about the nature of the conventions which are supposedly involved in art-making.

What is now needed is for more to be said about the framework—more about why a framework is essential for an object's being art and more about the nature and details of the framework which is essential for an object's being art.

Since a substantial amount has really already been said about the question of why a framework is essential, I shall begin with it. The failure of the notion of the Romantic artist has shown the necessity for some kind of a framework for the creation of art. In addition to the argument revolving around the notion of a Romantic artist, there is another argument which, so far as I know, has its origin in Danto's "The Artworld" and is used in both of his succeeding articles. This argument focuses on visually indistinguishable objects, one of which is a work of art and one of which is not: Warhol's *Brillo Box* and an ordinary Brillo box, a can-opener which is a work of art and one which is not, the painting *The Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced object which looks just like it. To this list can be added *Fountain* and a urinal which is its twin but is not a work of art.

What each of these cases of pairs shows is that it is not the visible characteristics of an object alone which make it a work of art, since the work of art is visually indistinguishable from an object which is not a work of art. This fact shows that the object which is a work of art must be enmeshed in some sort of framework (not visible to the eye in the ways that the colors of the objects, for example, are) which is responsible for its being a work of art. This argument does not rule out the possibility that what makes one of the visually indis-



tinguishable objects a work of art is the possession of a nonnatural (nonrelational) property. It seems impossible to defeat this mysterious view; however, since no one holds or takes this view seriously, I shall not concern myself with it. Incidentally, the Indistinguishable-Objects argument with minor adjustments applies outside the realm of visual objects.

In "The Artworld" the framework or context is used by Danto as an *explanation* of why one member of an indistinguishable pair can be a work of art and the other not. In the later articles, Danto uses the fact that one member of such a pair is a work of art and the other member is not as an *argument* for the *necessity* of a context. It is the argument which I am using here.

Some have had doubts about this argument when it makes use of the "Fountain" pair, because they maintain either that "Fountain" is not in fact a work of art or that it is unclear whether it is a work of art. Consequently, they feel that with the "Fountain" pair the argument never really gets started. Fortunately, the argument is not tied necessarily to the "Fountain" pair; either the actual case of the "Brillo Box" pair or the hypothetical case of "The Polish Rider" pair or some other hypothetical case is sufficient to get the argument off the ground. In addition, the argument can be modified so that it works for the "Fountain" pair even if "Fountain" is not a work of art. "Fountain" does not actually have to be a work of art to show the necessity of a context. It is sufficient that at some time some person mistakenly (although not insanely so) thought (or even could have thought) "Fountain" to be a work of art. The context within which "Fountain" apparently had a place would in this case explain the mistake. And, of course, many people have thought "Fountain" to be a work of art.

All of the traditional theories of art have, I think been committed to a framework of some sort but have not made it the focus of their theorizing. Consider, for example, the imitation theory. The view that art is imitation has implications in two directions: toward someone who creates the imitation and toward a subject matter. Thus, for the imitation theory a work of art exists within the framework of artist and subject matter, but it is not made clear by the theory whether the framework exists only for the creation of a given work of art at a specific time or whether the framework persists through time such that the *same* framework is the background for the creation of many works. Also, the theory does not make clear whether the framework itself may be the invention of a (Romantic) originator or whether the framework persists as an ongoing cultural matrix for particular artists. Consider another example. If, as Langer maintains, "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling," works of art would exist within a framework and one which would be rather similar to that of the imitation theory. "Creation of forms" points toward a

creator, and "forms symbolic of human feeling" points toward a certain specific subject matter. Here the focus is so firmly aimed at the alleged subject matter of art (human feeling) that the rest of the framework which is presupposed for the creation of art is virtually ignored. Thus, as with the imitation theory, the nature of the framework is not explored. All of the traditional theories of art could, I think, be shown to presuppose a framework of some kind for the creation of art, although perhaps not in so straightforward and simple a manner as in the cases of the imitation theory and Langer's theory. The point of these remarks about traditional theories is to indicate that the notion of a framework which makes possible the creation of art has been present all along in theorizing about art but that it has not been developed.

Even Beardsley's theory allows for a *minimal* framework in that if a Romantic artist created a work of art, the work would stand in relation to the agent who created it. The theory presupposes, however, that if a Romantic artist created art, the framework itself would be invented or created anew with the creation of the work of art. An important difference between Beardsley's theory and traditional theories such as the imitation theory in this regard is that the latter theories leave it unclear as to whether the framework is sometimes created on the spot or whether they view it as a persisting thing, while in Beardsley's view when a Romantic artist creates art what little framework there is is also created on the spot. Of course Beardsley's view does not rule out the possibility that once a framework has been created it might become a part of the culture and persist through time as the matrix for the activity of artists. It is clear that something more than a minimal framework of the kind that Beardsley's theory presupposes is required for the creation of art; for one thing, a framework which persists through time is required. In drawing this conclusion, I have moved beyond the question of why a framework is essential for an object's being a work of art into the question of the nature of the framework which makes art possible—namely, I have concluded that such a framework must persist through time. What else can be said about the nature of the framework?

I shall take as a point of departure for developing an adequate framework the relatively simple kind of frameworks involved in the imitation theory and Langer's theory. The frameworks of these theories, as mentioned earlier, consist of an agent (an artist) and a subject matter. It should also be noted that these frameworks are ones which persist through time rather than ones which are created on the spot by the agent. In both cases the agent's imitative action can be seen as the fulfilling of a cultural role.

I shall begin my description of the framework by subtracting something: the description does not need to contain an account of a

specific kind of subject matter or a subject matter of any kind. I take it that at this late date I do not have to refute the claims of the imitation theory, Langer's theory, and other traditional theories that some subject matter or other is a necessary feature of art. I have tried to show in Chapter II that Danto's more recent and more sophisticated claim that art is necessarily about something, which is a way of saying that art must have a subject matter, is false.

Something must also be said about Danto's view that "It is the role of artistic theories . . . to make the artworld, and art, possible," for if this claim is true, a place must be found within the framework for the functioning of artistic theories. Again, I have tried to show in Chapter II that Danto's contention about the role of artistic theories is false. Danto himself seems to have abandoned this view, which he never managed to make at all clear anyway in favor of his *aboutness* theory. So, there appears to be no reason to try to accommodate the functioning of artistic theories within the framework.

Only the role of the artist remains from the primitive framework of the traditional theories with which I started. Clearly this reduced conception is little more satisfactory as an explanation itself than was the primitive framework from which it was derived. But at least it leads in the right direction—in the direction of the artist and away from subject matter. In order to obtain an adequate account of the framework, as a first step it must be discovered what it is that makes it possible for someone to assume the role of artist.

Earlier in this chapter in opposing the notion of a Romantic artist, I made a suggestion about the framework within which art is created. I suggested that it is a framework which is typically acquired by a person's having previously experienced examples of art knowing that they are art, of having had training in artistic techniques, of having a background knowledge of art, or the like. This characterization, inadequate as it is, focuses on the artist and his knowledge or understanding of his role. Whenever art is created there is an artist who does it, but an artist also creates for a *public* of some sort. So, the framework also includes a role for a public to whom art is presented. Of course, a particular work of art does not have to be presented to a public in order to be art. The relations of a given work to a public are various. Many works of art have been created with the intention of presenting them to a public but for various reasons have never reached that public. A very large number of paintings, poems, and other kinds of works of art are experienced by only those persons who created them; for one reason or another, their creators do not want anyone else to experience their work. Art which is intended for a public, whether it reaches it or not, clearly presupposes a public. Even art not intended for public presentation presupposes a public. for not only is it possible to present it to a public (as sometimes

happens), it is a thing of a type which has as a goal presentation to a public. The notion of a public hovers always in the background, even when a given artist refuses to present his work.

By a public I do not mean just a collection of people. The members of a public are such because they know how to fulfill a role. Being a member of a public requires knowledge and understanding similar in many respects to that required of an artist. The following are examples of what I have in mind. To be a member of the public of representational paintings one must be able to see that certain designs depict objects, although of course this ability is not sufficient. To be a member of the public of stage plays one must have a knowledge of what it is for someone to act a part, and so on. Many of the abilities and sensitivities involved in being a member of a public are of an ordinary, everyday sort (although not thereby simple or uncomplicated) but others are achieved only as the result of special training and development.

Compare now the framework as it has thus far been developed with the framework of the imitation theory and Langer's theory. In the latter two the work of art is suspended between artist and subject matter. Disregarding the question of whether subject matter is an essential factor, the frameworks of these two theories are very thin. Neither theory relates an artist to his past or his culture, although neither theory denies the relation. The relation, so far as the theories are concerned, is just irrelevant; an artist is just someone who makes something which resembles something else. The institutional theory sets works of art in a complex framework in which an artist in creating art fulfills a historically developed cultural role for a more or less prepared public. I speak of a more or less prepared public because artists sometimes surprise their publics. An audience at a traditional play, or museum-goers faced with traditional pictures will typically be well prepared to experience and appreciate what they confront. Persons faced with avant-garde art are frequently less well prepared, although if they realize that what they are confronting is art, they are thereby part of a public and are prepared in a general sort of way.

A frequent complaint against *Art and the Aesthetic* is that although it is there claimed that art-making is institutional, nothing is done to show how art-making is rule-governed. The assumption of this criticism is that rule-governedness distinguishes practices such as promising which are institutional from practices such as dog-walking which are not. The assumption and the criticism are well-taken. Ironically, in *Art and the Aesthetic* there is substantial explicit discussion of conventions or rules which govern the presentation of artworks<sup>18</sup> and the behavior of members of publics,<sup>19</sup> but no discussion of rules which govern art-making. Art-making rules are implicit in *Art*

and the Aesthetic's account of the creation of art, in that the account makes claims about the necessary conditions of art-making. To state a necessary condition for an activity is one way of stating a rule for engaging in that activity.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, I did nothing to call attention to the rule-governed nature of art-making. In addition and as already noted, my account confused action-institution language and person-institution language. This confusion in turn obscured the implications which the account has for the rules of art-making, which is action-institutional.

In Chapter III I claimed that being an artifact is a necessary condition for being a work of art. This claim implies one rule of art-making: if one wishes to make a work of art, one must do so by creating an artifact.<sup>21</sup> In the present chapter I have claimed that being a thing of a kind which is presented to an artworld public is a necessary condition for being a work of art. This claim implies another rule of art-making: If one wishes to make a work of art, one must do so by creating a thing of a kind which is presented to an artworld public. The two rules are jointly sufficient for making works of art. The rules may appear to be satisfied by things which are not works of art, but it must be remembered that the rules operate *within* a specific, historically developed, cultural domain. A discussion of how this domain is isolated is presented in the following chapter.

I earlier argued that a framework is essential for something's being art. I then set about to describe a framework for art, talking primarily about artists and publics. The question now naturally arises: "Why is the framework which is being described the one which is essential; might not there be some other framework which is the essential one?" "Subject matter" frameworks of the kind envisioned by the imitation theory, Langer's theory, or even Danto's "aboutness" theory are not, it is clear, viable frameworks. Danto's remarks in his first article about artistic theories and art history suggests some kind of theoretical and historical framework, but he never makes clear what he means. The framework which I have begun to describe owes something to Danto's suggestions about art history, although it is hard to pinpoint exactly the relationship; that is, I have stressed the historical dimension of the artist's and the public's role—what they have learned from the past. Still, the fact that some frameworks will not do and the fact that Danto's suggestions have been taken account of in my conception of the framework do not prove that my description is the correct one. It can be said for my view that it is a conception of a framework in which works of art are clearly embedded and that no other plausible framework is in the offing. It is to be hoped that with the detailed description of the artworld in the next chapter the essential relation of works of art to their artworld context will become even



clearer. For lack of a more conclusive argument that my conception of art's essential framework is the right one, I shall have to rely on the description itself in this chapter and the next to function as an argument for the rightness of the conception. If my description of the essential framework is correct, or approximately so, then the description should evoke a "that's right" experience in the reader.





## Chapter V The Artworld

Thus far in discussing the institutional nature of art I have described art's essential framework. In doing so I have concentrated on the roles of artist and public, sketchily characterizing them in terms of what those who fulfill these roles know from the past about art, its creation, and the experience of it. It may be wise at this juncture to point out the obvious fact that creating art is an intentional activity; accidents, fortuitous and not, may occur *within* the creative process, but the overall activity is not accidental. I shall continue the discussion of artist and public roles, focusing on the relation between artist and public. In creating art an artist is always involved with a public, since the object he creates is of a kind to be presented to a public. The relationship is, then, one of creating an object of a kind which is presented. Actual presentation of the created object or even being intended by its maker for presentation cannot be required, because, as noted earlier, some works of art are never presented and some are not even intended by their makers for presentation to a public. What is to be emphasized here is that the created object is of a *kind* which is made for presentation. Consider some cases in which works of art are *not* presented. Some works are not presented by their creators because they consider them to be practice works, not worthy of presentation. Practice works are of a kind for presentation, otherwise it would be pointless to judge one unworthy of presentation. Some works of art are not presented because their creators are uncertain of their worth. Some works of art are not presented because their creators believe the works to be too revealing about themselves. One could go on. In these kinds of cases, there is what might be called a "double intention"; there is an intention to create a thing of a kind

which is presented, but there is also an intention not to actually present it. Artist and public in relation may be called, as I did on an earlier occasion, "the presentation group."<sup>1</sup> A presentation group is, in fact, the minimum framework for the creation of art.

The role of artist has two central aspects. First, there is the general aspect which is characteristic of all artists, namely, the awareness that what is created for presentation is art. Second, there is the wide variety of art techniques, of which the ability to use one in some degree, enables one to create art of a particular kind. When these two aspects are taken together the wide variety of things that artists do (paint, sculpt, write, compose, act, dance, and so on) are seen to be subsumed under the description "creating an object of a kind which is presented." The role of artist may be realized in various ways. The role may be filled by a single person as is typically the case with painters. Even with painters the role of artist may be internally complex in the sense that a number of persons may be involved, as when an assistant (or assistants) aids a master. In cases of this kind there is still a single role, but it is being fulfilled by several persons. By contrast, in the performing arts it is the rule that the artist role is in fact a multiplicity of cooperative roles. For example, in the theater, the artist role encompasses the roles of playwright, director, and actors. These various roles might in a particular case be played by a single person. In such a case there is still a variety of roles, but they are being fulfilled by a single person.

The role of a member of a public also has two central aspects. First, there is the general aspect which is characteristic of all members of art publics, namely, the awareness that what is presented to them is art. The second aspect of the role of a member of a public is the wide variety of abilities and sensitivities which enable one to perceive and understand the particular kind of art with which one is presented. Some sensitivities or their opposites may be of a specific physiological kind: deafness, tone deafness, ordinary tone hearing, perfect pitch; blindness, ordinary color vision, acute color sensitivity; and so on. Such sensitivities may be sharpened by training and experience; and they may be blunted by aging, accident, or other factors. Some abilities do not have a specific physiological base and depend in a fundamental way upon one's having acquired certain information—the ability to recognize, for example. Other abilities are of a more specific sort—the intellectual ability to comprehend a number of elements as members of a whole, for example. One could go on.

At the beginning of this chapter I spoke of artist and public in relation as "the presentation group." If, however, artists create and publics perceive and understand, there is a function which lies between them and brings them together. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I characterized this function as the task of "presenter"—stage man-



agers and their personnel, museum directors and their personnel, and the like. (There is a sense in which actors, directors, and the like are presenters, but they also participate in the artist role as well.) Also, in the earlier book, I distinguished a number of conventions (there called "secondary conventions") which are involved in the presentation of works of art to publics. A list of such conventions would be very long because of the diversity of the arts, but it is worth noting a few. One convention of theater discussed at length in the earlier book is the "nonparticipation-by-spectator" convention which functions as a rule for directing the behavior of the members of an audience. It is this conventional rule which is bent by Peter Pan's request for applause to save Tinkerbell's life and by similar devices employed in other plays. Another kind of convention is used to direct the audience's attention, for example, the curtain going up and the lights going down. Still another kind of convention of theater is the concealing of the actions of stagehands. In classical Chinese theater, however, the stagehand convention is to have the property man on stage among the actors during the performance. The two differing theatrical conventions for dealing with the same problem—the manipulation of various theatrical elements—provide an interesting and instructive contrast. In the domain of painting, it is a convention to hang paintings with their "backs" to the wall. As noted in the earlier book, we might have had the convention of hanging paintings with their "fronts" to the wall. The two actual solutions for the employment of stagehands and the way we actually hang paintings together with a conceivably different way of hanging them brings out an essential feature of conventions. Any conventional way of doing something could have been done in a different way. The failure to realize that things of the kind just mentioned are conventions can result in confused theory; for example, certain aesthetic-attitude theorists failed to see that the nonparticipation theater rule is a conventional rule and concluded that it is a rule derived from "aesthetic consciousness" and is written in stone. These attitude theorists are horrified by Peter Pan's request for momentary audience participation, because they think that the request violates a dictate of aesthetic consciousness. The request, however, merely amounts to the introduction of a new convention (which permits momentary audience participation) which small children, but not some aestheticians, catch on to right away.

The various arts employ many different conventions to do many different things, but there is no *primary* convention in the arts to which the above discussed conventions are secondary, as I claimed in *Art and the Aesthetic*. I wrote there of the primary convention of theater as "... the understanding shared by the actors and the audience that they are engaged in a certain kind of formal activity."

Of painting I wrote, "The *display* of a painting is the public aspect of the primary convention of presentation."<sup>1</sup> The first thing to be remarked about these two statements is that the first fails to mention playwrights and the second fails to mention artists (painters), that is, the creators of works of art. These failures arose because the statements occurred within a discussion of the presentation of works of art to audiences, a context within which the creators of works of art do not ordinarily play a big role. Any description of what earlier I mistakenly called "the primary convention" must exhibit a role for playwrights, poets, painters, and the like.

If, however, there is no primary *convention*, there is a primary *something* within which the conventions of the kind already described have a place. What is primary is the understanding shared by all involved that they are engaged in an established activity or practice within which there is a variety of different roles: creator roles, presenter roles, and "consumer" roles. There are, as I indicated, certain conventions involved in the presenting of works of art, and there are, no doubt, conventions involved in the creating of works. The practice within which these conventions are used and observed, however, is not itself conventional. One of the reasons that the way in which stagehands are employed in traditional Western theater is conventional is that it could have been done differently, and the way in which the same task is done in classical Chinese theater clearly shows this. The practice of theater itself or painting itself, however, is not just one way of doing something which could be done in one or more other ways, although there are alternative ways of doing theater and of painting, that is, engaging in these activities using different conventions.

There are rules of very different kinds within the institution of art. There are conventional rules which derive from the various conventions employed in presenting and creating art. There are, however, the more basic rules which govern the engaging in an art activity, and these rules are not conventional. The artifact rule—if one wishes to make a work of art, one must do so by creating an artifact—is not a conventional rule, it states a condition for engaging in a certain kind of practice.

Put in a formal way, the art enterprise can be seen to be a complex of interrelated roles governed by conventional and nonconventional rules. At the end of the last chapter, I discussed the nonconventional rules involved in the creation of art. Here at the beginning of this chapter, I have discussed the conventional rules involved in the presenting and receiving of works of art together with the practice within which these conventional rules have a place.

In addition to the roles of artist, presenter, and public, which are essential for presentation, there are supplementary roles for as-

sisting presentation which exist in a society of any complexity. Some of these roles are aimed at assisting an artist mount his work: producers, theater managers, museum directors, art dealers, and the like. Some of these roles are aimed at assisting a public locate, understand, interpret, or evaluate a work presented: newspaper reporters, critics, and the like. Some other roles revolve around the presented work at a greater distance: art historians, art theorists, and philosophers of art.

The artworld consists of the totality of roles just discussed with the roles of artist and public at its core. Described in a somewhat more structured way, the artworld consists of a set of individual artworld systems, each of which contains its own specific artist roles plus specific supplementary roles. For example, painting is one artworld system, theater is another, and so on.

There is an ambiguity inherent in the way I used the expression "the artworld" in *Art and the Aesthetic* which needs to be recognized and dealt with. I sometimes wrote there of the artworld as a system of roles, as I intend to be speaking of it here. I also wrote of "the core personnel of the artworld," and this way of speaking at least suggests that I was talking about a particular group of people involved in a person-institution. If I were to use the word "personnel" in characterizing the artworld in this book, I would want it to be understood in a metaphorical way to mean a person fulfilling a role in an action-institution. It is the roles I want to emphasize here and not the particular persons who play the roles. There is of course always a community of persons who fill the artworld roles and in a sense are the artworld (personnel) at a particular time, but this is another sense of "artworld."

What all of the artworld systems have in common is that each is a framework or a system for the creation of an artifact for presentation to a public.

Kendall Walton in a review of *Art and the Aesthetic* raises what appears to be a difficulty for the institutional approach as I have presented it. He notes that I give a nonexhaustive list of artworld systems—painting, sculpture, literature, and so on. He observes that there are many nonart systems for creating and presenting artifacts—religious activity, athletics, fashion shows, and the like. Walton then remarks that "we need a way of telling whether a given system not on the list is part of the artworld" and that I do not furnish a way of making this identification."

Walton makes several suggestions as to how the perceived difficulty might be resolved. The line he thinks most promising is the following: "Perhaps the systems of the artworld are connected by causal/historical ties; perhaps the artworld consists of a limited number of protosystems, plus any other systems which developed histori-

cally from these in a certain manner." But this line, even if worked out successfully, would still leave what many would perceive as a basic difficulty. Walton's suggested solution could presumably show, for example, that happenings belong to the artworld because they are descended from an artworld protosystem and that fashion shows do not because not so descended. In addition, his suggestion could show why nonartworld systems contemporaneous with the artworld protosystems are not part of the artworld, since they could not have descended from an artworld protosystem. The suggested solution, however, cannot show why a protosystem of the artworld, say, painting, belongs to the artworld.

Many would, I suspect, feel that an art theory should explain why a protosystem is a protosystem. These people would feel that unless such an explanation can be given there is an unacceptable arbitrariness about belonging to the artworld. It appears momentarily that Walton may be one of those troubled by the arbitrariness because, although he does not regard it as as promising as the suggestion of his just discussed, he makes another suggestion which, if successful, would resolve the "arbitrariness problem." He suggests, "It may be that the systems constituting the artworld are linked by crucial similarities, that what qualifies a given system for membership in the bundle is its possession of certain (nonrelational?) features in common with other members of the bundle."<sup>8</sup> An attempt to show the distinguishing crucial similarities of artworld systems would be, I think, a return to the traditional way of theorizing about art, a way which is foreign to the institutional approach. Walton does not really take his suggestion about "crucial similarities" seriously because he later claims that the class of works of art is a hodgepodge of exceedingly diverse items, saying that it is "hardly a natural class."<sup>9</sup> He makes clear that he also thinks the class of artworld systems is a hodgepodge. It is true that both the class of works of art and the class of artworld systems are hodgepodes, if what is meant by "hodgepodge" when it is applied to a class of objects is that the members of the class lack the "crucial similarities" sought by traditional theories. A central point of the institutional approach is that despite the "hodgepodge aspect" of the class of works of art (the lack on the part of its members of the "crucial similarities" sought by traditional theories), the class is unified by the fact that its members are members in virtue of their place within an artworld system.

The problem, however, with which Walton is primarily concerned—the hodgepodge aspect of the collection of artworld systems—remains. The class of works of art has a unity because each work of art is embedded in an artworld system, but what provides the unity which binds the systems themselves together? What Walton takes to be the most promising solution, as I have suggested, does not

resolve the hodgepodge aspect of the class of protosystems. And, if the hodgepodge aspect of the protosystems cannot be resolved, there does not seem to be much point in trying to resolve the hodgepodge aspect of the systems "not on the list" by relating them to the protosystems. What has to be accepted is the "arbitrariness" of being an artworld system—the lack of a "crucial similarity" of the kind sought by traditional theories which would easily and obviously distinguish it from nonartworld systems. If there were such "crucial similarities" there would be no need for an institutional approach—the traditional approach would suffice.

Some may feel these results involve a vicious circularity, just as some felt that the definition of "work of art" in *Art and the Aesthetics* did. I acknowledged there that the definition was circular but argued that it was not viciously so because the circle it ran was large and contained a lot of information about the artworld. There is something to be said for this argument, but I now believe that more can and should be said about the "problem" of circularity.

Although circularity in definition and explanation is widely regarded as a grave logical fault, little or nothing seems to have been written which explores the question in any depth. No doubt the explanation for this lack is that most have thought it obvious why circularity is a fault. No doubt circularity is a fault in many cases where it occurs, but is it always a fault?

There is a philosophical ideal which underlies the noncircularity norm of definition, although it does not seem to have been articulated.<sup>10</sup> The ideal goes something like this. There are basic or primitive terms which are unanalyzable and, hence, undefinable. One can learn the meaning of these primitive terms only in some nonlinguistic way: sensory experience, rational intuition, or whatever. In characterizing the ideal, the primitive terms can be represented by small letters: *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. The basic terms can be used to define first-level definable terms which can be represented by capital letters: *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*. There may be second-level terms (*M*, *N*, *O*, and *P*) which are defined in terms of first-level terms or a combination of primitive and first-level terms. There may be third-level terms which are defined by lower-level terms and so on and so on. According to the ideal, all definitions lead back to and depend on the primitive terms and the things they denote. The primitive terms are the foundations of knowledge. The ideal may not envisage a multiplicity of levels above the primitive level, but it does require a level of primitive terms and a level of defined terms.

Can this ideal of the nature of definition be realized? Has it even been attempted on any scale at all? Dictionaries, which are large-scale attempts at definition, make no attempt to isolate a set of primitive terms and are unashamedly circular. Perhaps, however, the ideal



might be achieved on a more limited scale. Even if in a domain more limited than that of a dictionary, say, the language of physical objects, one could achieve a set of reductive definitions as envisaged by the ideal, it does not follow from this that such an achievement is possible for definition in any other domain.

There may be a more pragmatic ideal underlying the norm of noncircular definition, one which is a kind of shadow of the first epistemological ideal sketched just above. According to this view, words used to define other words are only primitive relative to the context in which the defining occurs. The functionally primitive terms can be defined in other contexts. On this view, epistemologically primitive terms do not have to turn up, although perhaps they might in some cases. Perhaps some sets of dictionary definitions realize the pragmatic ideal, in that although there are no epistemologically primitive terms upon which they ultimately rest, they constitute a series of definitions which contain no elements which circle back. For example, the word "saddler" is defined as "One who makes saddles," and "saddle" is defined as "A seat for a rider, to be used on the back of a horse or other animal." There does not seem to be any reason to think that the definition of "seat," "rider," "back," and so on will require the use of the words "saddler" or "saddle." Just as the possibility that some definitions might realize the epistemological ideal does not show that all definitions must, the fact that some definitions realize (or seem to realize) the pragmatic ideal does not show that all definitions must. In other words, the fact that some dictionary entries realize the pragmatic ideal does not mean that every term in the language can be made to do so. Bearing in mind these observations about the two ideals, the only way to show that a circular account of art is incorrect would be either to show that either of the ideals under the discussion can be or has been achieved quite generally or that a correct, noncircular account of art can be or has been given. Since neither of these two has been accomplished, the way is at least open for an exploration of a circular account of art.<sup>11</sup>

This very way of putting it will, I suppose, send logical shudders through many, but if art is the sort of thing I think it is, the only correct account of it would have to be a circular account.

Part of, or at least attached to, the ideal of noncircular definition is the view that the role of definition is to inform someone of the meaning of an expression one is ignorant of by means of words one already knows. It is true that one does sometimes look up the definition of a highfalutin word with which one is unfamiliar, say, a word such as "penultimate." More often than not, however, one looks up the definition of a word in order to see if one really knows what it means (and usually discovers that one does) or in order to see what the

exact meaning of a word is, although one knows in a general way what the word means and has no trouble in using it correctly in a wide variety of contexts.

The definitions which philosophers have given of "work of art" do not function, nor are they really intended to function, as the dictionary definition of a pedantic word such as "penultimate" functions for most of us. (This is no doubt true of the other definitions which philosophers have given.) Virtually everyone, including even quite small children, has at least a partial understanding of the expression "work of art." Virtually everyone can recognize some things as works of art, knows how some works of art are made, and the like. Thus, virtually no one is in need of a definition of "work of art" in the way that many would be in need of a definition if they came upon an unfamiliar word such as, say, "penultimate." So a philosopher's definition of "work of art" does not and cannot function in the way a definition is supposed to function according to the ideal mentioned earlier—to inform someone of the meaning of an expression one is ignorant of by means of words one already knows. The reason it cannot so function is that anyone who has gotten to the point of reading documents on the philosophy of art will already know what the expression "work of art" means.

What philosophical definitions of "work of art" are really attempting to do is then to make clear to us in a self-conscious and explicit way what we already in some sense know. That philosopher's definitions have been so frequently misdirected testifies to the difficulty of saying precisely what we in some sense already know—a difficulty that Socrates tried to get Meno and his slave boy to appreciate. Definitions of terms such as "work of art" cannot inform us of something we are really ignorant of. Furthermore, the fear that some philosophers have of circularity in certain definitions is, I think, groundless. In any event, if a definition of "work of art" is circular, it may just be so because of the very nature of what the definition is about.

In what now follows I shall present an account of art which is clearly circular, or to put it in a better way, an account which reveals the *inflected* nature of art. By "inflected nature" I mean a nature the elements of which bend in on, presuppose, and support one another. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I attempted to define only "work of art," although I discussed the other aspects of the artworld, as I then conceived of them, in some detail. There, in defining, I focused on the "center" of what I am now calling art's essential framework—works of art themselves. I now think that each of the structural interworks of the framework requires definition, for the framework's center is not its only vital part. Consequently, I shall now, in effect,

try to supply a small dictionary—a dictionary for the philosophy of art. This series of definitions is just a shorthand way of presenting in summary form the major conclusions of the previous chapters.

I shall begin with a definition of the term “artist,” not because it has alphabetical priority over the other terms to be defined, but because the series of definitions seems to flow most easily from this particular source. Any of the structural intersections would, however, serve as a beginning point.

*I) An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art.*

There is nothing controversial, or even surprising, about this definition, so matters are off to a smooth start. The definition in itself is not circular, although it does cry out for a definition of “work of art” which will come along shortly. The “understanding” clause in the definition is necessary to distinguish an artist (say, a playwright or a director) from someone such as a stage carpenter who builds various stage elements. What the artist understands is the general idea of art and the particular idea of the medium he is working with. To forestall misunderstanding, let me hasten to add that a stage carpenter or the like may very well understand the art of the stage but that such knowledge is just not required for the carrying out of the function which constitutes his participation in the artistic process. This definition of “artist” also makes it clear that art-making is an intentional activity; although elements of a work of art may have their origin in accidental occurrences which happen during the making of a work, a work as a whole is not accidental. Participating with understanding implies that an artist is aware of what he is doing.

These remarks lead naturally to the definition of “work of art.”

*II) A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.*

Being a work of art, thus, involves having a status or position within a structure which in a way is somewhat similar to the earlier view of *Art and the Aesthetic*. According to the present view, however, the status in no way results from a conferral but rather is achieved through working in a medium within the artworld framework. Let me note here, as I did earlier, that an object need never actually be presented to an artworld public in order to be a work of art. The definition speaks only of the creation of a *kind* of thing which is presented. To forestall one possible misunderstanding, in using the word “kind”

here I am not talking about genres or even larger categories such as *painting, play, poem*, or the like. The kind specified by the definition is of a larger sort, namely, an artifact of a kind to be presented. The kind in question is, of course, not to be identified with the kind *work of art*, because the kind in question is only an aspect of a work of art.

To forestall another possible objection to the definition, let me acknowledge that there are artifacts which are created for presentation to the artworld public which are not works of art: for example, playbills. Things such as playbills are, however, parasitic or secondary to works of art. Works of art are artifacts of a primary kind in this domain, and playbills and the like which are *dependent* on works of art are artifacts of a secondary kind within this domain. The word "artifact" in the definition should be understood to be referring to artifacts of the primary kind. The definition could be explicitly reformulated: A work of art is an artifact (primary) of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.

In the discussion following the definition of "artist," I remarked that art-making is clearly an intentional activity. In a parallel way, the definition of "work of art" implies that such objects are intentional, i.e., are the product of an intentional activity. The definition of "works of art" leads on to the notions of *public* and *artworld*.

*III) A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them.*

This definition is not only not circular in itself, it is stated in a general way and does not necessarily involve the artworld. Put otherwise, it is a formulation which characterizes all publics, not just those of the artworld. The definition of "public" is not formerly tied to the other definitions I am giving. Any actual public, however, will be necessarily tied to some particular system; for example, the artworld public is necessarily related to artists, works of art, and other things.

*IV) The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems.*

At this point it may be worth emphasizing what is perhaps implicitly clear enough, namely, that the roles of artist and public and the structure of artworld systems are herein conceived of as things which persist through time and have a history. In short, the definitions characterize an ongoing cultural enterprise. This definition of "the artworld" certainly gives the appearance of being circular in itself, although this impression is at least counteracted by remembering that

the expression "all artworld systems" is short for a list which includes literary system, theater system, painting system, and so on. The circularity in itself of the definition of "the artworld" may be real or apparent, but the circularity of the whole set of definitions becomes transparent with the definition of "artworld system."

V) *An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public.*

The series of definitions has not led down strata after strata until bedrock is reached. The "final" definition, that of "artworld system," simply reaches back and employs all the previous focal terms: "artist," "work of art," "public," and "artworld." What is to be made of this blatant circularity? Conventional philosophical wisdom tells us to recoil in logical horror and to reject it as uninformative and worse. Beginning with the charge of uninformativeness, as noted earlier, in a basic sense we do not need to be informed about art—we already have a fundamental understanding of it. Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, there is a sense in which the definitions are informative; if they accurately reflect the nature of art and the relations which hold among the various elements of the artworld, then they do in a way inform us. These remarks may counter the charge of uninformativeness, but what of the charge of logical fault—the "worse" of the "uninformative and worse"? If, however, the definitions accurately mirror the inflected nature of the art enterprise, then they are not logically faulty.

I have done what I could to show, in this chapter and the one before that works of art are embedded in what I have called an *essential* framework. What the definitions I have given do, I believe, is to give the leanest possible description of that essential framework and the embedded works. What the definitions reveal, by eliminating distracting detail, is that art-making involves an intricate, co-relative structure which cannot be described in the straightforward, linear way that such activities as saddlemaking presumably can be described. In short, what the definitions reveal and thereby inform us of is the inflected nature of art. The definitions help us get clear about something with which we are already familiar but about whose nature we have not been sufficiently clear from a theoretical point of view. What the definitions describe and thus reveal is the complex of necessarily related elements which constitute the art-making enterprise.

Danto's "indistinguishable-pairs" argument and the failure of the Romantic-artist thesis show that works of art require a framework, but what shows that the framework has the inflected nature that the definitions picture it as having? Reflection on how we learn about art



will, I think, reveal in what sense and why an account of art must be circular. How, then, do we learn what it is that we know about art?

We do not learn about art from the theories or definitions of philosophers; their remarks would be unintelligible if we did not already know about art. We learn about art in different ways, but we invariably do so at a tender age. Children are frequently taught about art by being shown how to make works for display: "Now draw a nice picture to take home to your mother or to put up on the board." One may be introduced to art in a more abstract, lecture-like way: "These are pictures done by some men who lived a long time ago to be put up in churches." Art instruction such as the foregoing are typically preceded by remarks which prepare a child for it; for example, "This is the way we draw a face," which helps a child come to understand representation. I do not mean to suggest by my example that a knowledge of representation is necessary for the subsequent understanding of art, but it is almost always involved in the beginnings of teaching about art—at least with Western art.

These, then, are some of the ways that we learn about art. *What* is it that such instruction teaches? We learn that a complex of inter-related things is involved in the art-enterprise: artists (oneself, other children, men who lived a long time ago), works (the nice picture, pictures of religious figures), an artworld public (mother, the other children, the teacher, people who go into churches). We also learn that special places can be set aside for the display of works (the refrigerator door at home, the board at school, the walls of a church).

Considered more abstractly, what is it that such instruction teaches us? We are taught about agent, artifact, and public all at the same time, and this is no accident for the various artworld elements do not exist independently of one another. In learning about what a poem, a painting, or a play is, we cannot fail to learn that it is an object with a past—an object which results from a human action—and that it is an object with an intended future—an object which is of a kind which is presented. When we come to know that an object is a work of art, or even just see an object as a work of art (perhaps mistakenly), we fit it into a certain kind of cultural role—the kind of role I have been trying to describe in this and previous chapters.

Perhaps a good way to round out the account of the artworld would be to consider some of the implications of the speculations of the last chapter about the origins of art. There it was speculated that the art enterprise must have evolved out of a prior activity or activities as the cumulative effect of the innovations of what I called "Romantic proto-artists." At a certain point—perhaps a rather elongated point—a prior activity ceased to be merely a single activity and became a complex one—say, religious activity plus an art form. The participants themselves (in a certain way) and some of the other elements of

the prior activity metamorphosed into the kind of structure I have called "an artworld system." Given this account, one can see that the activity or role of artist, the conception of the product of this activity as a work of art, and the activity or role of public had to develop together, growing into the identifiable elements of a single integrated whole—an artworld system.

Artist, work of art, artworld, and artworld system are what I shall call "inflected concepts." I mean the expression "inflected concept" to designate a concept which is a member of a set of concepts which bend in on themselves, presupposing and supporting one another. No member of such a set can be understood apart from all the other concepts in the set. Consequently, in coming to understand a concept which is a member of such a set, one must in some degree come to understand all the other member concepts as well. There are, I suspect, other sets of inflected concepts: law, legislature, executive, and judiciary, for example. The domain of "cultural concepts" is perhaps rife with inflected sets. In any event, an account of the art enterprise requires the use of a nest of inflected concepts.

But isn't there more to be said about art? Even many of those who are in general agreement with the institutional approach may feel that there is more to the nature of art than my remarks allow. Certainly those who disagree with what I have said, but still think that art has an essential nature, will feel that there is more to that nature than the institutional theory claims. Beardsley, for example, clearly thinks that more ought to be said. In the concluding paragraph of "Is Art Essentially Institutional?" he remarks that the institutional approach fails to answer the question which has motivated the main tradition of Western philosophy of art. This tradition, which according to Beardsley is a kind of essentialism, has assumed "... that there is a function that is essential to human culture, and that appears in some guise in any society that has a culture, and that works of art fulfill, or at least aspire or purport to fulfill."<sup>12</sup> At the end of his concluding paragraph, he remarks that the institutional theory does not tell us "... whether there are basic and pervasive human needs that it is the peculiar role of art to serve."<sup>13</sup> Beardsley does not hazard a guess as to what this essential function is or what the basic human needs are, but his remarks certainly suggest that he thinks that works of art fulfill an essential function, i.e., one which must occur in any human culture, which is to satisfy or try to satisfy certain basic human needs. The kind of essentialism which Beardsley has in mind here is different from the essentialism which has characterized many traditional theories. The essential in the imitation theory is that which is necessary for an object to be a work of art, namely, being an imitation. Even if the imitation theory were an adequate theory of art, there would be no compelling reason to conclude that imitations are neces-

sary for human culture or that they satisfy *basic* human needs. Parallel remarks go also for the theories of art as symbols of human feeling, art as significant form, and other traditional theories. I suspect that what Beardsley has in mind as occurring in every human culture, i.e., as essential, are created objects which satisfy a (basic) aesthetic need, say, a need for aesthetic experience. To sum up, the essentialism of traditional theories differs from that which I think Beardsley has in mind in the following way. For the traditional theories what is essential is a property which an object must have in order for the object to be a work of art—the property of being an imitation or of being a symbol of human feeling, or whatever. For Beardsley, it is works of art themselves which are essential—essential to society to serve some purpose. The theory Beardsley has in mind is a theory of what works of art do, not of what they are. Beardsley's implied theory is not then a theory of art in the traditional sense and, hence, not in competition with the imitation theory, Langer's theory, or the institutional theory.

If I understand what Beardsley is suggesting, a number of difficult details would have to be worked out for it to be made plausible. First, there is the empirical question as to whether every human culture has works of art. This empirical question would have to be answered whether works of art fulfill an aesthetic function, some other kind of function, or a combination of an aesthetic function and some other kind of function. Then there is the difficult conceptual question of saying what "aesthetic" means when an aesthetic need is spoken of. Finally, there is the problem of specifying what it means to say that a need satisfied by art is *basic*.

In response to the first implied claim, it is not clear to me that a human culture must have art. Beardsley might reply that my formulation is too strong because he has written only of what is essential for "... any society that has a culture. . . ." If this qualification is made, it must then be discovered what it takes for a society to have a culture in order to even begin to test the empirical question, which now becomes "Does every society with a culture have art?" When put in this qualified way, the question may have lost its empirical nature.

If the need which Beardsley has in mind is an aesthetic need, one is faced with the notoriously difficult task of saying what "aesthetic" means. Actually, Beardsley speaks of needs rather than of a single need, so that he may have in mind that there is an aesthetic need plus one or more other needs which "... it is the peculiar role of art to serve." Of course, the larger the number of needs specified, the more difficult it is to envisage its being the peculiar role of art to serve them. In any event, I rather doubt that a satisfactory account can be given of an aesthetic need or of a set of needs which art serves, assuming that either of these is what Beardsley has in mind.

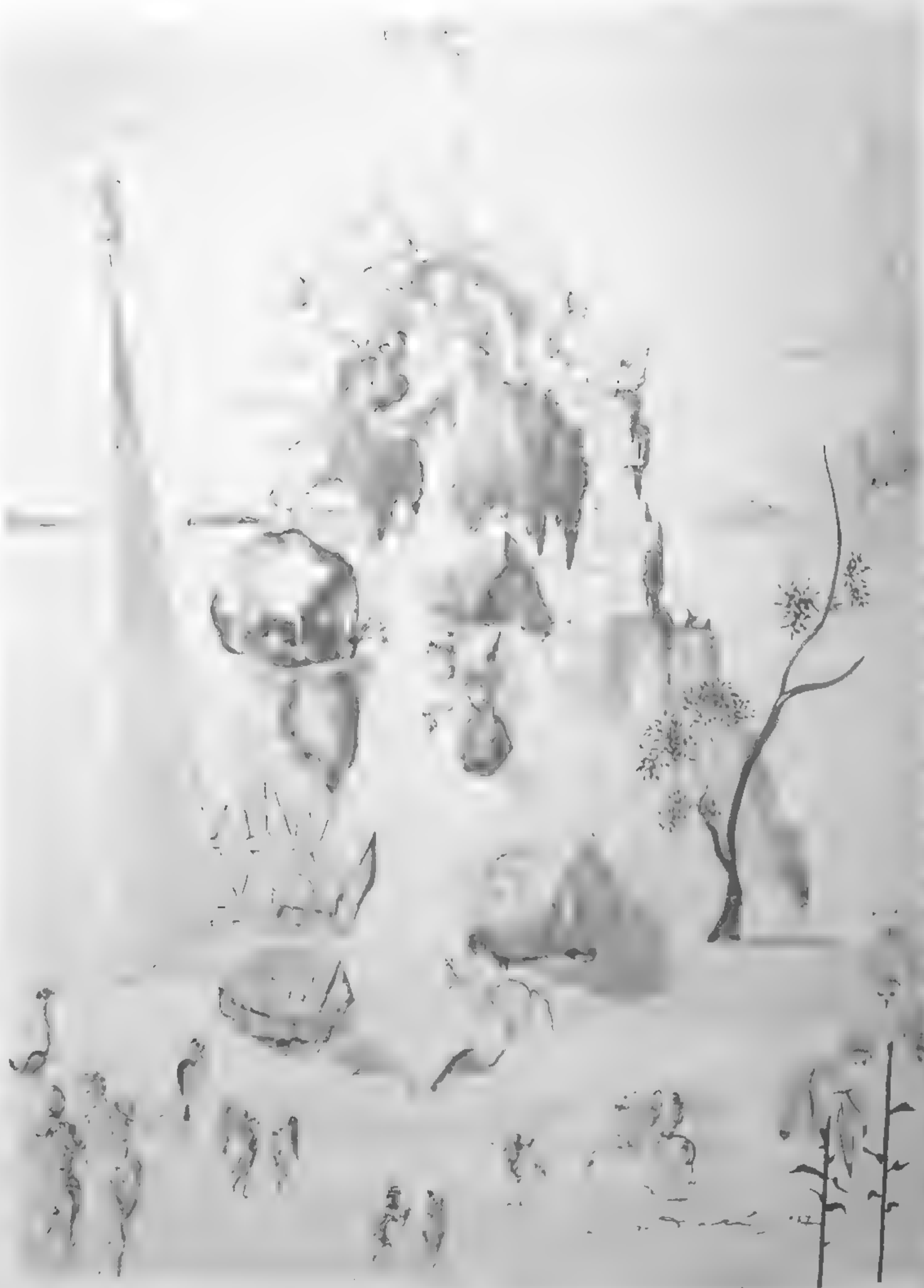
Finally, what does it mean to say that the envisaged needs are *basic*? Are they like the need for air, water, and food, i.e., necessary for life? Or are they like the need for social structure which is necessary for there to be a human culture? If the answer to this last question is in the affirmative, then perhaps we are back to the first thesis, namely, that art is essential for a society with a culture. Beardsley's remarks ought not to be pressed too hard, for he intended them only to raise an issue and to indicate a direction. I have discussed his remarks at the length that I have, because they articulate a feeling that many have—that there must be more to art than the institutional theory allows or reveals.

The institutional theory, however, places virtually no restrictions on what art may do, it seeks only to catch its essential nature. The institutional nature of art does not prevent art from serving moral, political, romantic, expressive, aesthetic, or a host of other needs. So there is more to art than the institutional theory talks about, but there is no reason to think that the more is peculiar to art and, hence, an essential aspect of art.

Still, many, as I suspect Beardsley does, would like the notion of an aesthetic *something*—experience, appreciation, attitude, or the like—to be an aspect of the essential nature of art. While I do not think that this traditional conception of the aesthetic has a role to play as an essential aspect of art, it requires examination. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I attempted to incorporate a “neutrally” and untraditionally conceived idea of aesthetic object into the definition of “work of art.” For reasons which I hope will become clear in the next chapter, I have not attempted in the preceding chapters to even discuss my untraditional notion of aesthetic object, much less to try to make it an essential aspect of art. I turn now in the final chapter to recent attempts to revive the aesthetic attitude and to a recent attempt to make the “aesthetic,” conceived in a traditional way, a criterion of aesthetic object. The discussion of these topics leads in the direction of an institutional conception of aesthetic object.







## Chapter VI *Aesthetic Object*

In the preceeding chapters I have been attempting to respond to criticisms which are addressed to global aspects of the institutional theory of art. A number of articles have been aimed more narrowly at what might be called the institutional conception of aesthetic object. Since this conception necessarily relates to works of art, the general problem is that of the aesthetic objects of works of art, also known as the problem of aesthetic relevance.

In *Art and the Aesthetic* I accepted what I took to be Monroe Beardsley's meaning of "aesthetic object of a work of art," namely, "those properties of a work of art which are properly appreciated and or criticized." I did not, however, accept Beardsley's way of determining which features of a work of art belong to its aesthetic object. I argued that his *principle of perceptibility* could not, on the one hand, rule out nonaesthetic aspects of a work such as the perceptible property man of a classical Chinese play or the ink marks used to print a poem or, on the other hand, rule in such aesthetic aspects of works of art as the meaning of a poetic line or the invisible wires used to "fly" Peter Pan about the stage. I also argued that Beardsley's *principle of distinctness* could not be wielded without presupposing a great deal. The positive part of my remarks—the institutional conception of aesthetic object—amounted to trying to make explicit "the great deal" that Beardsley was presupposing. My criticism of Beardsley's view still seems to me to be satisfactory, and I refer the reader to the earlier account for its details.

Before beginning an examination of the four articles to be discussed in this chapter, it will be useful to discuss briefly the notion of aesthetic object and why it arises. In the last chapter I characterized

works of art as artifacts of a certain sort. Such artifacts may have properties of two very different kinds; for example, a painting might be completely blue and red on its front and have a white back. Both the blue and the white would be in some sense properties of the artifact which is the work of art, but it is intuitively clear that the two color properties would be of a very different sort. The blue might be intense or garish and the white might be brilliant or pallid, that is, both the blue and the white might be, to use Sibley's terminology<sup>1</sup>, "aesthetic qualities." Although the two would be aesthetic qualities of a single thing, there would be an important sense in which they would be aesthetic properties of two quite different things. In this case it would be a reasonable thing to comment on the intensity or garishness of the blue *in* the painting. It would be odd, however, to comment on the brilliance or pallidness of the white *in* the painting, but not odd to comment on the brilliance or pallidness of the color of the back of the painting. (It would, of course, be rather unusual to talk about the color of the back of a painting.) It is the difference between what is in the painting (or any other work of art) and the other properties of the painting (or any other work of art) which generates the problem of the aesthetic objects of works of art. Some theorists have discussed this question as a problem of distinguishing between a work of art as a physical object and as an aesthetic object, but putting it this way raises unnecessary philosophical questions and obscures the real nature of the problem. Other theorists have discussed the question as a problem of what can and what cannot be the object of the aesthetic attitude, but this approach involves grave difficulties. Here, as in *Art and the Aesthetic*, I shall understand the problem of the aesthetic objects of works of art to be the problem of which properties of works of art are properly appreciated and/or criticized. One would properly appreciate and/or criticize the blueness in the hypothetical painting described above. One could appreciate and/or criticize the whiteness of the back of the painting, but this would be "improper" in the sense that one would have lost contact with or strayed from the point of art appreciation and/or criticism.

From the above it is clear that the notion of aesthetic objects of works of art has no direct connection with aesthetic qualities as Sibley conceives of them; aesthetic qualities may occur as elements in the aesthetic objects of works of art, as "other" properties of works of art, or as properties of things which are not works of art.

Some theorists have maintained that the notion of the aesthetic object of a work of art is a superfluous notion, being just another name for what is really the work of art itself. This contention is, I think, merely a terminological matter, for the problem then becomes one of distinguishing those properties which make up real works of art from those which are merely properties of the vehicles which bear the

works of art. The problem is the same whatever terminology is adopted.

The first attack on the institutional theory of aesthetic object which I will consider is that of Robert Schultz.<sup>2</sup> In the first part of his article Schultz defends my attempt to undermine the notion of aesthetic attitude against a recent attack, but in the last part of his article he assails my account of aesthetic object, arguing that it tacitly depends upon a conception of the aesthetic which is very similar to that of the aesthetic-attitude theory. Schultz has, however, misunderstood the nature of my theory of aesthetic object.

Schultz prefaces his criticism by making a distinction of something more than simple terminological significance which I wish to adopt—the distinction between an independent sense of the aesthetic and a dependent sense of the aesthetic. The independent sense is independent because it has no necessary connection to art. A sense of aesthetic which derives from the aesthetic attitude would be an independent sense because the aesthetic attitude can, so the theory says, be taken toward virtually anything—not just art. Aesthetic qualities of the Sibley kind would also fall into the independent category because they have no necessary connection to the notion of art. The aesthetic of aesthetic objects of works of art (as characterized just above) is obviously dependent because it has application only to works of art.

Whether the independent sense and dependent sense of the aesthetic have any real connection is a question which will be dealt with at a later point in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is and has been my intention to keep these two senses conceptually separate. Schultz argues that despite my attacks on aesthetic-attitude theory that in my formulation of the definition of "work of art" in *Art and the Aesthetic* and earlier formulations I make an independent sense of the aesthetic basic to the definition. Specifically, what he has in mind is the use of the notion of appreciation in the aesthetic object aspect of my definition of "work of art"; his contention is 1) that appreciation is the pivotal concept in my definition (*the* thing that makes an artifact a work of art) and 2) that appreciation introduces an independent sense of the aesthetic (which is contrary to my wishes).

One way to deal with Schultz's criticism would be to say that since the notion of appreciation no longer plays a role in the definition of "work of art" as I have formulated it in this book, there is no need to discuss it. However, because Schultz's criticism brings out some difficulties in the earlier version of the institutional theory of aesthetic object while at the same time misconceiving the "spirit" of the older version, it should be discussed. I shall discuss Schultz's criticism not so much to defend the earlier version as to try to set the record straight.

Schultz's argument runs as follows:

- 1) "Dickie wants to define an art object as, roughly, an artifact which is a candidate for appreciation."
  - 2) "... appreciation is irrelevant to the proper treatment of Duchamp's urinal as an art object."
  - 3) "For Dickie, the independent aesthetic is to be characterized in terms of appreciation. Dickie is very careful to point out that the sort of appreciation he is speaking of is ordinary appreciation, with no special qualifications."
  - 4) "But then what is principally relevant for the arthood of an object is, finally, the object's being deemed a candidate for having this ordinary state [appreciation] directed toward it."
  - 5) Since any artifact can be a candidate for appreciation, "... Dickie's account makes it fundamentally arbitrary ... just which ... objects are art objects."
- First conclusion: [Being a candidate for appreciation] "... is a very implausible solution to the problem of relevance for various modernist works."
- Second conclusion: It is an absurd result that "... Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, a 200-year-old pine tree, Goedel's Theorem, and an act of kindness ... " can all be works of art.<sup>3</sup>

First, what is right about Schultz's criticism? His second premise serves to help uncover an important problem. He is quite right, following Ted Cohen,<sup>4</sup> to call attention to the inadequacies of my account of appreciation. Schultz does this by claiming that appreciation is irrelevant to Duchamp's *Fountain*. Cohen had made a similar charge, maintaining that Duchamp's *Fountain* cannot be appreciated, hence, cannot be a candidate for appreciation. I had responded to Cohen in *Art and the Aesthetic* that *Fountain* has qualities—a shiny surface, oval shape, and the like—which are things of a type which can be appreciated. Schultz says that the appreciation of such qualities is irrelevant "to the proper treatment of Duchamp's urinal as an art object." Schultz thinks that Cohen is right when he says, "What significance we can find in 'Fountain' we find not in the urinal but in Duchamp's gesture."<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged in *Art and the Aesthetic* that Cohen is right about the significance of *Fountain* as a gesture, but the conception of *appreciation* I adhered to there prevented me from



realizing the full thrust of Cohen's point. In *Art and the Aesthetic* I defined "appreciation" as follows: "All that is meant by 'appreciation' . . . is . . . in experiencing the qualities of a thing one finds them worthy or valuable."<sup>6</sup> Defining "appreciation" with reference to *qualities* caused me to respond to Cohen by saying that *Fountain* has qualities which one can appreciate (shiny surface and the like), virtually ignoring its gesture significance. I should have defined "appreciation" as meaning "in experiencing a *characteristic* or the *characteristics* of a thing one finds it or them worthy or valuable." This definition, which does not limit features one can appreciate to *qualities*, allows the protest characteristic of *Fountain* to be appreciated.

The redefinition shows how, contrary to Schultz's second premise, appreciation can be relevant "to the proper treatment of Duchamp's urinal as an art object." The criticism made by Schultz's second premise is, however, justified given the way the earlier version of the theory was formulated.

Now, what is wrong with Schultz's criticism? I shall consider the second conclusion first. Schultz's conclusion that anything (*Oedipus Rex*, a 200-year-old pine tree, and so on) can be a work of art and that this is absurd is correct, but he gives the wrong reasons for drawing this conclusion. The definition I gave in *Art and the Aesthetic* goes as follows:

*A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).*

Schultz's highly abbreviated version of this definition defines a work of art as

*"roughly, an artifact which is a candidate for appreciation."*

This overly rough statement preserves the two-condition nature of the definition, but his subsequent argument entirely ignores the artifact condition, which is the real source of trouble—the **gate which allows** in everything. The artifact condition, plus my allowance of "conferred artifactuality" allows in potentially everything. I will not comment on this point, as it was sufficiently discussed in Chapter III. The argument Schultz gives for the second conclusion can be summarized as follows:

- 1) *Dickie's use of appreciation is that of an independent sense of the aesthetic.*
- 2) *Dickie employs this independent sense as a criterion of arthood.*
- 3) *Anything can be an object of an independent sense of the aesthetic (an assumption embedded in the notion of an independent aesthetic).*

*Conclusion: for Dickie, anything can be a work of art.*

In effect, Schultz focuses entirely on the second condition of my definition. His summary statement of the definition is, however, too abbreviated, because he fails to take account of the context in which candidacy for appreciation is embedded. If he had taken this context into account, he would not have been tempted to think appreciation is being employed as an independent sense of the aesthetic.

First, the appreciation condition was intended as one of two conditions, not as *the* condition of arthood. Second, the appreciation condition was specifically intended to deal with the problem of the aesthetic object of works of art, not to function as *the* condition of arthood. In what follows, I shall be talking of appreciation as it relates to the aesthetic object of works of art, although Schultz speaks simply (too simply) of appreciation as it relates to works of art (i.e., as the condition of arthood). I could not have intended that it is *appreciation* as such which makes something the aesthetic object of a work of art, because as I noted things other than works of art can be appreciated. Nor could I have intended that it is *candidacy* for appreciation as such which makes something the aesthetic object of a work of art, because as I noted things other than works of art can be candidates for appreciation. It is the clear intent and the spirit of the earlier version of the institutional theory of art to claim that what makes something the aesthetic object of a work of art is that it is a set of aspects which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation *within the artworld*. Schultz simply ignores the whole artworld context; in fact, he does not even mention the question of the institutionality of art, except for a brief remark in a footnote of which he makes no use in his article. The main point of the theory is to call attention to the complicated institutional structure within which works of art have their being. The appreciability (the capacity to be appreciated) spoken of in the theory is of a highly dependent sort, i.e., dependent on the existence and functioning of the artworld. Schultz focuses on one element in the theory, ignoring its connections to the other elements.

Schultz's first conclusion is that being a candidate for appreciation "... is a very implausible solution to the problem of relevance for various modern works." This conclusion about "various modern works" is more or less a generalization of Schultz's second premise which is about only *Fountain*. An aspect of the conclusion is justified; the aspect which turns upon Cohen's insight that *Fountain's* gesture character is relevant.

Cohen's criticism can be accepted and accommodated by expanding the scope of *appreciation*, as I did earlier. The general thrust of Schultz's conclusion, however, is very misleading in that it assumes (an assumption derived from his inadequate summary of my definition of "work of art") that simply being a candidate for appreciation is intended as a solution to the problem of relevance. The institutional theory of *Art and the Aesthetic* attempted to solve the problem of relevance (the question of which aspects of a work of art belong to its aesthetic object) by claiming that the relevant aspects are those which are candidates for appreciation as determined by the various artworld practices and the conventions which cluster around the individual practices. Neither appreciability nor candidacy for appreciation is supposed to determine anything about relevance according to the earlier version of the institutional theory.

The second criticism of the institutional theory of aesthetic object which I will discuss is that of Gary Iseminger. In an important respect Iseminger's notion of the aesthetic objects of works of art closely resembles that of Beardsley. Iseminger opens his article by speaking of aesthetic relevance and agrees with me that not every property of a work of art is aesthetically relevant; or, in my terminology, not every property of a work of art is an element of the aesthetic object of that work. He notes that the color of the back of a painting is not aesthetically relevant, and he presumably agrees that the colors on the front of the painting are aesthetically relevant. He then correctly points out that on the view of *Art and the Aesthetic* "... a necessary condition of a property's being aesthetically relevant is that it has a certain status conferred on it in accordance with the conventions which govern ... the artworld." Of course, I have now abandoned any notion of *conferred* status, but it is the necessity of artworld conventions for aesthetic relevance with which Iseminger really wishes to take issue. Consequently, the revised theory must take account of his arguments.

In the midst of his initial remarks, however, he says something which is very strange and which, I think, underlies the whole disagreement. He says that there are "... aesthetically relevant properties of things which are not works of art."<sup>10</sup> and he gives as an example the delicacy of a flower. But the way "aesthetic relevance" is used in the literature of aesthetics ties it necessarily to works of art and to

speak of aesthetically relevant properties of natural objects such as flowers is just a confusion. Iseminger seems to accept that "aesthetic relevance" means "that which belongs to the aesthetic object of a work of art" when he notes that the color of the back of a painting is not aesthetically relevant. But if that is what "aesthetic relevance" means, then it has no application to natural objects. Iseminger has not, however, just made a slip of the pen, for several pages later he writes,

*. . . we may more easily see the point of the artworld's conferring the status of a work of art on something if we suppose . . . that aesthetic relevance exists prior to and independent of the artworld. Indeed, it seems almost a commonplace to note that aesthetic properties characterize natural objects and that aesthetic states of affairs (as I shall call them) exist independently of the institutions of the artworld. And this fact, if it is a fact, would provide a satisfying natural answer to the question of why an agent of the artworld might choose to confer the required status on, say, a piece of driftwood. He could do so, normally, because he noticed that it already exhibited certain aesthetically relevant properties."<sup>11</sup>*

In this passage, Iseminger speaks first of aesthetic relevance, then of aesthetic properties, then of aesthetic states of affairs, and finally of aesthetically relevant properties. These remarks, together with his earlier remark that the delicacy of a flower is an aesthetically relevant property, suggest to me that he is confusing the aesthetically relevant (that which belongs to the aesthetic object of a work of art) with aesthetic qualities or properties of the Sibley kind. Who would deny that aesthetic qualities exist prior to and independent of the artworld (at least many do). However, aesthetic relevance cannot exist independently of art.

In any event, Iseminger proceeds to try to develop a notion of appreciation with which he intends to "mark off the domain of the aesthetic."<sup>12</sup> After making such qualifications as that which is appreciated is known noninferentially and that actual appreciation need not occur, he produces the following definition-like statement: ". . . aesthetic states of affairs are those which are capable of being appreciated, . . ."<sup>13</sup> There is nothing in Iseminger's account of marking the domain of the aesthetic which treats works of art differently from natural objects, a feature which seems to me to be a grave shortcoming but one which Iseminger clearly intends.

He illustrates the difference between his view and my account

by showing what the different results are in a given case. He chooses the case of the property man in traditional Chinese theater. The Chinese property man, dressed unobtrusively in black, moves about the stage *during* the performance, changing scenery, holding a certain kind of flag in front of an actor who has been "killed" on stage as the actor walks off stage, and the like. I had argued, as noted earlier, against Beardsley's perceptibility criterion of aesthetic object that the Chinese property man is perceptible under the normal conditions for viewing such plays, but that the property man is clearly not part of the aesthetic objects of such plays. My argument was that the Chinese property man, although plainly visible, is excluded from the aesthetic objects of such plays, i.e., is made aesthetically irrelevant, by the conventions of such theater. The knowledgeable theater-goer knows the conventions and thereby knows enough to ignore the activities of the Chinese property man. My point was that the Chinese property man's actions are not part of the performance of the play as are the activities of the actors. Iseminger seems to understand my argument. Nevertheless, he says, "But it seems clear that, on my account [Iseminger's], these activities [those of the Chinese property man] . . . are appreciable by the audience and hence the performance as characterized by them is an aesthetic state of affairs. . . . I am inclined to think that *to the extent that* his activities are appreciable by the audience they are an aspect of the performance. . . . It is not as if a convention could, by itself, *prevent* his activities from being a part of the performance if he regularly upstaged the (other?) actors."<sup>1</sup> It is no doubt possible that the property man might do something that would be appreciated by the audience, but he could not thereby upstage the actors, only an actor can upstage another actor; a Chinese property man cannot be part of the performance, he could only intrude on the performance, as a stagehand of a Western stage production or someone from the audience might intrude. Given Iseminger's account, a member of the audience who happened to wander onstage and whose action could be appreciated would become part of the performance. Thus, for example, for him, there is always the possibility that *Hamlet* might acquire another character at any moment, say, a Mr. John Smith from the audience who for some odd reason joins the actors onstage. On his account, anything which can be appreciated might become part of the aesthetic object of *Hamlet* or that of Renoir's *Three Bathers* or that of any other work of art. I am not denying that the Chinese property man could not exhibit an aesthetic property; he might, for example, move in a graceful way. What I am denying is that his graceful movement is part of the performance of the play as is, say, the graceful movement of an actress who portrays a Chinese empress. Similarly, Mr. John Smith might speak with great dramatic effect when he intrudes upon the stage, but such behavior cannot turn



him into an actor portraying a character in *Hamlet*, even if he wears Elizabethan garb and speaks in iambic pentameter. It is true that a Chinese property man has a kind of regular relation to classical Chinese plays that Mr. John Smith does not have to *Hamlet*, but my point is that they are both distinct from the actors and action of the play. A number of people have objected to my conclusions about the Chinese property man, and I do not want the point of the argument to be obscured by the details of an exotic example. If the Chinese property man is properly appreciated and/or criticized, then I am wrong in my example, but the distinction between the aesthetic-object properties of a work of art and its other properties remains. Whatever may be the case about the details of these or any other examples, the main focus at this point must be on Iseminger's use of appreciability as the criterion of the aesthetic objects of works of art.

Iseminger's account of aesthetic objects of works of art has essentially the same kind of flaw as Beardsley's account. What can be appreciated (for Beardsley it was what can be perceived) is not powerful enough to separate the aesthetically relevant properties of art from the aesthetically irrelevant properties of art or to separate the aesthetically relevant properties of art from anything else in the immediate environment of the work of art. The theories of both Beardsley and Iseminger fail because neither takes into account the fact that works of art are cultural objects which are created within complex artworld practices. They both treat works of art as if they were natural objects such as orange trees and sunsets. Let us return to the example of the color of the back of the painting with which this discussion began. On Iseminger's account, the reason that the color of the back of the painting is not aesthetically relevant must be because it is turned to the wall and we cannot see it and, hence, cannot appreciate it. If for some, say, historical religious reason our practice were to hang paintings with their fronts to the wall and we were allowed to turn them around only briefly to look at them, on Iseminger's account the color of the back of the painting would presumably be an aesthetically relevant property of the painting.

Iseminger tries to make one sense of "aesthetic" (whose criterion is appreciability) do double duty: 1) to pick out properties such as delicacy and gracefulness (which may be properties of works of art or natural objects) and 2) to separate the aesthetically relevant properties of a work of art from its aesthetically irrelevant ones. Appreciability, however, just cannot do the second job of separating the various properties of works of art. The failure of Iseminger's argument suggests that the word "aesthetic" has more than one sense. It is not clear to me that appreciability can do the first job either, i.e., the job of distinguishing aesthetic qualities (gracefulness) from nonaesthetic qualities (squarishness), but I am not concerned with that question here.

Iseminger's theory resembles some of the older aesthetic-attitude theories in an important respect. These theories assumed that if a property of an artwork is an object of the aesthetic attitude it is automatically determined that that property is aesthetically relevant, i.e., determined that that property is part of the proper object of appreciation and/or criticism. In presenting his version of aesthetic-attitude theory, Jerome Stolnitz speaks, for example, of compatibility with disinterested attention as being the criterion of aesthetic relevance. Both Iseminger and Stolnitz try to make a single sense of "aesthetic" do two quite different things, although they do not characterize the sense in the same way. Stolnitz notes that one result of using the criterion he does (a single criterion of "aesthetic") is that some important aspects of works of art—moral vision, for example—turn out not to be aesthetically relevant, i.e., not proper objects of appreciation and/or criticism.

Two recent aesthetic-attitude theorists, Robert McGregor and Carolyn Korsmeyer, while defending the attitude approach, have acknowledged that such things as an artwork's moral vision are proper objects of appreciation and/or criticism.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, they have concluded that the proper object of appreciation and/or criticism contains things which fall into two distinct classes—those things which are the object of an aesthetic attitude and other things (such as moral vision) which are not the object of an aesthetic attitude. McGregor's and Korsmeyer's conclusion concerning aesthetic relevance is a step in the right direction, although I think that their attempts to defend the notion of the aesthetic attitude are misguided.

McGregor, whose view I shall discuss first, distinguishes two separate and unrelated senses of the word "aesthetic": a *descriptive* sense of "aesthetic" which applies to the objects of the aesthetic attitude and a *commending* sense of "aesthetic" which applies to characteristics of artworks which are not the object of the aesthetic attitude. The distinction he makes between two senses of "aesthetic" is one which must be made and is, I believe, the important contribution of his article. His characterizing of the second sense as a commending one, however, is badly confused.<sup>2</sup> A property of a work of art which may be appreciated and/or criticized but one which McGregor takes *not* to be an object of an aesthetic attitude may be commendable, but it may not be; commending has no necessary connection to such properties. Consequently, McGregor's notion of a commending sense of "aesthetic" is of no help in working out a theory of aesthetic object as it applies to works of art. As will be seen later, Korsmeyer's handling of such things as moral vision is more promising.

But what of McGregor's descriptive sense of "aesthetic"? Is there an aesthetic attitude and must it be used as a partial basis for the notion of aesthetic object? McGregor contends that my arguments

against the aesthetic attitude in "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude"<sup>17</sup> fail and that the aesthetic attitude correctly conceived provides a sound, although partial, basis for aesthetic relevance. Taking Stolnitz's theory as a typical aesthetic-attitude view, I had originally argued that Stolnitz's central notion was disinterested attention and that he was wrong in saying that there are two kinds of attention: interested attention and disinterested attention. McGregor agrees that attention is primitive and cannot be split up into different kinds, but he maintains that Stolnitz's use of "disinterested attention" is just a manner of speaking and not central to his theory.<sup>18</sup> In short, I had aimed at the wrong target. I think McGregor is wrong in his interpretation of Stolnitz's theory, but let us assume that he is right.

McGregor wants to focus on *perception* rather than attention, distinguishing aesthetic perception from nonaesthetic perception. He says perception involves "at least three components: (1) the motives, purposes, and interests of the observer; (2) attention; (3) the properties or aspects of the object attended to." He has already agreed that attention is primitive, hence, it cannot be used as a variable in distinguishing aesthetic and nonaesthetic perception. The properties of the object attended to cannot be a distinguishing variable because, according to aesthetic-attitude theory, any properties or objects can be the object of aesthetic perception. McGregor chooses the first of the three and argues that it is ". . . the motives, purposes, and especially the interests of the agents . . ." which distinguish aesthetic from nonaesthetic perception.

Consider McGregor's examples of aesthetic and nonaesthetic perception at work. Nine men are looking at an orange tree and each makes a statement which is indicative of his interest. The statements are

- (1) *It's a Valencia;*
- (2) *A tree that bears that well would be good to invest in;*
- (3) *The species was first introduced from Brazil;*
- (4) *The leaves are pale—it needs iron;*
- (5) *The shape is very elegant;*
- (6) *The pale green leaves contrast nicely with the dark brown of the trunk;*
- (7) *The articulation of the branches is interesting;*
- (8) *Exquisite odor, isn't it?*
- (9) *Notice how languidly the fruit hangs on the boughs.*

Let us call the man who said, "It's a Valencia," "George" and the man who said, "The articulation of the branches is interesting," "Jerome." McGregor says that our intuitions tell us that Jerome is

perceiving aesthetically and that George is perceiving nonaesthetically. In general, the first four statements are supposed to indicate nonaesthetic perception and the last five aesthetic perception. Let us assume that George's interest is practical, i.e., in classification and that Jerome's is nonpractical. What does this show about their perceiving? McGregor is right that the perceivings of George and Jerome are different because one of the three aspects of perception is different in the two cases, namely, the interests of the perceivers. To mark the difference McGregor is free to call Jerome's perceiving aesthetic and George's perceiving nonaesthetic if he wants to. But what does making the distinction and giving it a name accomplish? Nothing prevents practical George from noticing the articulation of the branches even though he is interested in classifying, which shows that perceiving aesthetically is not *necessary* for perceiving aesthetic qualities. And, nothing insures that nonpractical Jerome will notice the articulation of the branches, which shows that perceiving aesthetically is not *sufficient* for perceiving aesthetic qualities. Moreover, nothing prevents nonpractical Jerome from noticing that the tree is a Valencia. "Being a Valencia" does not sound like something one would call an aesthetic characteristic, and "having branches which are interestingly articulated" does sound like something one would call an aesthetic characteristic. But neither characteristic is necessarily brought into focus or created by the perceiver's interest, nor is noticing either characteristic prevented by the perceiver's interest. *Either characteristic can be seen independently of the interest of the perceiver.* (I do not, of course, wish to deny that our interests guide our perceptions.) So calling Jerome's perceiving "aesthetic" does not provide a connecting theoretical link between "aesthetic perception" and "aesthetic qualities" such as elegance, green contrasting nicely with dark brown, interesting articulation of branches, exquisite odor, and languidly hanging fruit.<sup>29</sup> Notice that the five aesthetic qualities McGregor mentions are of the kind that Frank Sibley notes are the referents of terms which he says, "function only or predominately as aesthetic terms."<sup>30</sup> Sibley lists "graceful, delicate, dainty, handsome, comely, elegant, gash, dynamic, pretty," and others. Sibley further maintains that "there are many words which are seldom used as aesthetic terms at all . . ." He lists "red, noisy, brackish, clammy, square, docile, curved," and others. Sibley distinguishes between perceptual qualities which are aesthetic and perceptual qualities which are nonaesthetic. McGregor is apparently following Sibley to the extent that the aesthetic qualities of the orange tree he lists are all "Sibley aesthetic qualities."

If, as McGregor seems to want to have it, "aesthetic quality" refers to the sort of perceptual qualities which Sibley calls "aesthetic," then there is no connection between McGregor's characteriza-

tion of aesthetic perception and aesthetic qualities. Aesthetic qualities so conceived are quite independent of perceiver's interests.

Korsmeyer, like McGregor, wishes to defend a limited aesthetic-attitude view, conceding that some of the characteristics of a work of art which can properly be appreciated and/or criticized are not linked to aesthetic perception. Unlike McGregor, however, she chooses not to use the term "aesthetic" to refer to these characteristics, preferring the term "artistic." Korsmeyer's handling of the distinction is more clear-headed than McGregor's in that she does not attach any value connotation to the "artistic" characteristics as he does to his commending sense of "aesthetic". As noted earlier, these two attitude theorists in making the distinction here under discussion make a move in the right direction. Korsmeyer has, I think, made the move in a firmer, better way, but, of course, she had the benefit of reading McGregor's paper.

Neither of these two attitude theorists, in these papers at least, is much interested in (to use Korsmeyer's term) the "artistic" characteristics of art, i.e., those which are not linked to "aesthetic perception." Both McGregor and Korsmeyer are primarily interested in salvaging what can be salvaged of the theory of aesthetic perception. I turn now to Korsmeyer's defense of the limited aesthetic-attitude theory.

Korsmeyer's description of aesthetic perception, although perhaps not stated in as detailed a manner as McGregor's, is essentially the same. Unlike McGregor, however, Korsmeyer not only gives examples of aesthetic qualities, she gives a definition of "aesthetic quality." Her view is, thus, more formally developed than McGregor's. Ironically, the greater development makes it easier to reveal the difficulty in the theory. Korsmeyer characterizes aesthetic perception in the following way: "aesthetic perception must mean a kind of awareness or attention during which practical ends of any sort are not of foremost interest."<sup>21</sup> For her, "aesthetic qualities must mean those which can be appreciated without regard for practical, moral, or theoretical relevance."<sup>22</sup> The two characterizations appear to be related in that the first refers to the submerging of "practical ends" and the second refers to the submerging of "practical, moral, and theoretical relevance." The connection is, however, more apparent than real.

Consider the hypothetical case of a painting in which the basic composition is squarish, the color combination is delicate, and the representational aspects of which convey a particular moral vision. Korsmeyer would concede that the painting's moral vision can be properly appreciated, although it would not be with regard to a practical (moral) end. It is also proper to appreciate the painting's delicacy, and this would be a case of aesthetic appreciation because the appre-



ciation could be (and in this case by hypothesis is) without regard to any practical end. Presumably for Korsmeyer, a characteristic such as being square, unlike delicacy, could not be appreciated aesthetically because it would have to be appreciated with regard to some practical end. For the purposes of the argument, let us agree that Korsmeyer's account of aesthetic qualities and her distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic enable us to distinguish among: 1) an "artistic" characteristic (moral vision) which is not an "aesthetic" characteristic, 2) an aesthetic quality (delicacy), and 3) a nonaesthetic quality (being square). The difficulty is that both the nonaesthetic quality (being square) and the aesthetic quality (delicacy)—and perhaps even the moral vision—can be perceived without regard to any practical end. In other words, aesthetic *perception* as characterized by Korsmeyer has no theoretical bearing on or connection with the aesthetic nonaesthetic distinction as it relates to perceived qualities. For Korsmeyer, it is really aesthetic appreciation (appreciation without regard for practical, moral, or theoretical relevance) which does the supposed work of distinguishing aesthetic from nonaesthetic perception. Her notion of aesthetic appreciation is, however, left undeveloped.

In summary, what is the situation? McGregor and Korsmeyer begin by admitting that perceiving aesthetically as they understand it is only of partial help in resolving the problem of aesthetic relevance as it is traditionally understood. They both assert, however, that there is some vital connection between aesthetic perception and aesthetic qualities. It turns out, however, that perceiving aesthetically (without regard to any practical end) guarantees nothing about the aesthetic qualities of perceived objects. Someone might still think that perceiving aesthetically would at least be generally conducive to experiencing the aesthetic qualities of perceived objects. On the contrary, I am inclined to think that persons with a practical end in mind might on occasion experience aesthetic qualities which persons without practical ends in mind might miss. For example, a person with the end in mind of writing a review (a critic) might well be more attentive than someone without a practical goal. Having a practical goal, of course, is no more a guarantee of perceptiveness than is not having a practical goal. In any event, aesthetic perception has been characterized by both McGregor and Korsmeyer, but it is so weak a notion that it does not yield the desired results with respect to perceptual qualities.

Whatever is to be said about aesthetic perception, Sibley's distinction between aesthetic qualities such as elegance and nonaesthetic qualities such as squareness seems to have an intuitive plausibility about it. In saying this, I do not endorse Sibley's controversial and perhaps untenable views on taste which in some sense is supposed to provide a foundation for the distinction. There seems no

reason, however, to deny that there is a sense of "aesthetic" which refers to a certain kind of perceptual quality, although no one, including the aesthetic-attitude theorists, has succeeded in working out a theory which underlies the distinction between aesthetic qualities and nonaesthetic qualities.

Let me now turn to the question of aesthetic relevance. Even if aesthetic perception did work as McGregor and Korsmeyer want it to work, i.e., by providing a theoretical connection to aesthetic qualities, it would not, as some think it does, have a bearing on the question which is the focus of this chapter, namely, the question of which properties of a work of art constitute the work's aesthetic object and how this is determined. Suppose that aesthetic perception could isolate aesthetic qualities, even then aesthetic perception alone could not distinguish, for example, between the aesthetic qualities of a painting and the aesthetic qualities of the wall on which the painting hangs. Unlike some aesthetic-attitude theorists, neither McGregor nor Korsmeyer claims that aesthetic perception determines the properties which belong to the aesthetic objects of works of art. What they do claim, I think correctly, is that both aesthetic qualities and such properties as moral vision are legitimate focuses of criticism. They also claim, I think incorrectly, that because of aesthetic perception the properties which are the aesthetic qualities of a work of art and the properties which are not aesthetic qualities (i.e., moral vision) are of a radically different kind. For them, for example, a novel has, in effect, *two* kinds of objects of criticism: an object which has as elements such things as imagery, dramatic tension, and other aesthetic qualities (which are supposed to have a special relation to aesthetic perception) *and* an object which has as elements such things as the moral vision of the work, truths revealed about human nature, and the like. Since there are basic difficulties with the aesthetic-attitude theory, there seems no good reason to require that there be *two* different kind of objects, both of which are proper objects of art criticism. As an alternative to the approach of McGregor and Korsmeyer, consider the way in which Beardsley conceives of the aesthetic objects of works of art: for him aesthetic objects of works of art are simply the proper objects of appreciation and/or criticism. Adopting Beardsley's approach gives one object which may have as its elements a variety of different kinds: nonaesthetic qualities of the Sibley kind (redness, squareness, etc.), aesthetic qualities of the Sibley kind (delicacy, gracefulness, etc.), personal qualities of the kind noted by Colin Lyas (perceptiveness, sensitivity, etc.),<sup>23</sup> expressive qualities (sadness, happiness), as well as characteristics such as a moral vision and being revealing of certain aspects of human nature. Thus an art critic might say of the aesthetic object of a particular

painting that its dominant color is red and its composition squarish, that the various shades of red and earth colors are delicately balanced, that its composition and colors have the expressive quality of sadness, and that the represented scene reveals a sinister aspect of human nature.

I have now admitted of two senses of "aesthetic": a sense which refers to aesthetic qualities and a sense which refers to aesthetic objects of works of art, i.e., all the properties of a work which are properly appreciated and/or criticized, including aesthetic qualities. I want to maintain that, although the term "aesthetic" appears in both of these expressions, the two senses have little or nothing in common. "Aesthetic quality" refers to a certain kind of perceptual quality which can be distinguished, although just what the basis for the distinction is is not clear. "Aesthetic object of a work of art" is what might be called a "collection expression" in that it refers to the properties of a work of art which may properly be appreciated and/or criticized, and, consequently, its collected elements may in a given instance include various aesthetic qualities, non-aesthetic qualities, personal qualities, expressive qualities, representational characteristics, moral characteristics, and so on.

What then is the solution to the problem of relevance—the problem of which properties of works of art are properly appreciated and/or criticized, and the problem of how this is determined? Beardsley, earlier aesthetic-attitude theorists such as Stohrutz, and Iseninger share the view that there is some general, clear cut way to do this. Roughly, Beardsley claims the determination can be made by applying the criteria of perceptibility and distinctness. The earlier aesthetic-attitude theorists thought that the properties of works of art which are properly appreciated and/or criticized are those properties which can be the object of the aesthetic attitude. The more recent aesthetic-attitude accounts of McGregor and Korsmeyer do not really attempt to give a coherent view of how aesthetic objects are determined. Iseninger claims the determination of which properties are properly appreciated and/or criticized can be made by applying the criterion of appreciability. None of these accounts is satisfactory. It may seem to some that a theory of a kind these theorists are seeking—an account of a general criterion for criteria which will determine which *kind* of properties of works of art are aesthetically relevant—can be worked out.

I am doubtful that a theory of *kinds* of properties can account for which properties of a work of art are aesthetically relevant and which are not—the problem is just not one of distinguishing kinds of properties. Works of art have perceptible properties which are relevant and perceptible properties which are not; they have properties which can

be appreciated and which are relevant and properties which can be appreciated and are not relevant. One can "aesthetically perceive" both relevant and nonrelevant properties of works of art.

The solution to the problem of aesthetic relevance is not a general one of the sort sought by these philosophers; the solution, I believe, will have to be a piecemeal affair, and the determination of the aesthetic-object properties of a particular work of art will have to derive from knowledge of the art form within which the particular work falls. The conventions used in presenting works of art give guidance of limited generality. For example, the fact that the stagehands in traditional Western theater are hidden backstage and the Chinese property man of classical Chinese theater is dressed unobtrusively in black are clues which guide us to exclude them as aesthetically irrelevant. But such guidance is of limited generality; nothing prevented or prevents, for example, a clever playwright of classical Chinese theater from writing a play in which the property man in some way becomes part of the performance of the play. Similarly, with regard to the color of the back of a painting, nothing prevents a painter from creating a work of visual art similar to a painting but which is painted on both sides of a piece of canvas. If Picasso can depict an object from two different perspectives on one side of a canvas, another artist could depict an object from one perspective on one side of a canvas and from another perspective on the other side of the canvas. Such two-sided paintings would require a new way of presenting, similar perhaps to that of sculptures which are to be viewed from more than one place.

As long as one is faced with traditional kinds of art, one can rely on the established conventions for guidance. When innovation occurs, one will be to a certain extent on one's own to figure out what is going on, although since the innovation will occur within some traditional form or other, there will be some minimum of guidance.







### *Epilogue: Reflections on the Philosophy of Art*

As noted in Chapter 1, both Plato's remark that art is imitation and his method of philosophizing have had a long-lasting effect on the philosophy of art. First, even when art theorists have rejected his idea that art is imitation, the example of Plato's remark that art is imitation has influenced them to think that the defining feature(s) of art can be discovered by focusing narrowly on works of art themselves. Second, his method of seeking timeless essences has influenced philosophers of art to think that the features of art they take to be defining features are validated as defining because they reflect the timeless essence of art.

When philosophers of art at last began to think seriously about the nature of art in the Nineteenth Century, they easily saw that Plato's remark that art is imitation is false. If, however, they refused to follow Plato's lead concerning the nature of the essence of art, in trying to find a replacement for imitation, they nevertheless focused on works of art in as equally narrow a way as Plato did. What followed was a succession of theories each with its candidate for the essence of art—the expression of emotion, the communication of emotion, significant form, forms symbolic of human feeling, and others. Each of these theories shares two large problems with the imitation theory.

First, each of the theorists is trying to discover the essence of art in some highly visible property which is of some obvious value. The search for the essence of art seems to have been thought of as a search similar to the search for gold nuggets—a search in which one peers closely at individual things. The essence of art was presumed to be “on exhibit” to be seen or heard, if one just looked or listened in a clear-headed and intent enough way. The difficulty is that the

defining features of art are more complex and harder to apprehend than these theorists supposed.

The second difficulty is related to the first. While each of the easily-noted properties specified as the essence of art by the various theorists does characterize some works of art, none of the properties characterizes each of the things which are works of art. Consequently, none of these properties can be a necessary condition of art.

Ziff and Weitz, in concluding that the platonic method of seeking essences is inapplicable to the theory of art, nevertheless follow the example of Plato's remark about imitation and examine only easily-noted properties of works of art. Of course, at the time Ziff and Weitz were writing, the theories available for refutation were formulated in terms of easily-noted properties. Even in rejecting artifactuality, which *then* was a more or less easily-noted property, they follow Plato's example. (Given recent developments in art, it is not *now* so easy to tell that a given work of art is an artifact.) In any event, the institutional theory completely rejects the platonic example and purports to discover the defining conditions of art in not-so-easily-noted properties of art.

It is perhaps worth noting that the institutional theory in no way derogates or wishes to diminish the properties of obvious value that the earlier theorists have found in art; the institutional theory easily accommodates the representative, expressive, symbolic, formal, and such properties of art, but it rejects them as defining characteristics. There is nothing about the institutional theory which inhibits or restricts art in any way. Art has been the bearer of a myriad of things, ranging from those of the greatest importance to the trivial. The institutional theory allows the freedom for art which Weitz quite correctly is so anxious to preserve in his attack on traditional theories of art. There is a sense in which the institutional theory absorbs all of the earlier theories, each of which has caught a glimpse of something that art can do.

The first task of a theory of art is to focus on properties which all works of art share. As we have seen in the course of this book, in order to discover properties that works of art have in common, it is necessary to step back and view works of art in their larger setting rather than focus on them narrowly and individually. The institutional theory emphatically does not emulate the example of Plato's remark which presumes that the search is for an easily-noted property.

The institutional theory also abandons Plato's method of seeking timeless essences by means of philosophical intuition, a method perpetuated in the work of many philosophers of art. These later philosophers perhaps did not conceive of their procedures as involving the philosophical intuition of a Form (of Art) which abides in an ontologically distinct realm. They did, however, think that the definition of "art" which they formulated caught the timeless essence

of art just as surely as a faithful Platonist thinks his definitions can reflect essences.

Ziff and Weitz attacked the essentialist method of these philosophers of art, arguing that there is nothing shared by the members of the class of works of art and that, consequently, the class can have no essence. For Ziff and Weitz the question of what the essence of art is just cannot arise because they believe that there is no property which works of art share.

We have seen, however, that works of art do share properties—artifactuality and being of a kind created to be presented to an art-world public—and that these properties are sufficient for defining “art.” Are these properties the essence of art? I have not shown that these properties do not derive from the Form of Art. Perhaps they do constitute the essence of art, but the institutional theory makes no claim that they do. What the institutional theory does try to do is to describe the human practice of creating and consuming art. In giving the description of the art enterprise that I have, I spoke of the *essential* framework of art. In so speaking, I do not intend to make any claim about a timeless essence of art but mean to describe the conditions necessary for a particular activity or practice. The institutional theory conceives of this practice as one which has emerged in and through time, as a historical development. This conception contrasts with the view of the earlier philosophers of art who conceived of their theories as ahistorical reflections of the timeless essence of art.

Another way of showing the difference between the institutional theory and the theories of earlier philosophers of art is to note the way in which the definition of “art” is regarded by the theories. In the case of the earlier theories, since each conceives of its definition as embodying the essence of art, its definition serves as a *foundation* for the theory. The various conclusions which make up the theory are derived from this foundation. In the case of the institutional theory, the definition of “art” is not at all foundational. First, it is one among several interconnected definitions, no one of which is foundational. The definitions are, as I said, inflected—they mutually support one another. Second, the definition of “art” and the other institutional definitions are formulated at the end of the development of the theory in Chapter V, and logically this is where they belong. The theory attempts to describe the art enterprise and the definitions are the distillation of that description.

The institutional theory of art thus marks a sharp break with traditional theorizing about art. The content of the institutional theory and its central definitions are radically different from those of the traditional theories, and the institutional theory’s method of arriving at its conclusions also contrasts sharply with that of the earlier theories.





## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Chapter III contains a lengthy account and criticism of Ziff's and Weitz's views.

### Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of Philosophy*, October 15, 1964, pp. 573-584. Reprinted in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, G. Dickie and R. Sclantani, eds. (New York, 1977), pp. 22-35. All references are to page numbers in the anthology.

<sup>2</sup>*Theoria*, Parts 1-3, 1973, pp. 1-17. Reprinted in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, op. cit., pp. 551-562. All references are to page numbers in the anthology.

<sup>3</sup>*The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 1974, pp. 139-148.

<sup>4</sup>I am assuming here that for the Imitation Theory being an imitation is both necessary and sufficient to make something art. If being an imitation were only a necessary condition of arthood, then that would not be a theory of art but only one necessary truth about art or part of a theory of art. Perhaps, neither Socrates nor anyone else has held the Imitation Theory so understood, but the theory has been around in the sense that some have thought that Socrates and others held the view

<sup>5</sup>An abstract of Kennick's unpublished paper appears in *The Journal of Philosophy*, October 15, 1964, pp. 585-7.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, "The Artworld," p. 33.

<sup>7</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, "Artworks and Real Things," p. 558.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 561.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 561.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 561-2.

<sup>15</sup>"Danto and Dickie on Art," in *Culture and Art*, Lars Aagaard-Mogensen, ed. (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1976), p. 181.

<sup>16</sup>*Op. cit.*, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," p. 140.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>19</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>21</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>22</sup>George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic* (Ithaca, New York, 1974), pp. 19–52.

<sup>23</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>25</sup>William Kennick, who read the manuscript of *Art and the Aesthetic*, warned me against concluding that fakes are not art. I should have accepted his advice then.

<sup>26</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 561.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 561.

### Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>"The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 15 (1956), 27–35. Weitz has discussed his conception of art in numerous other places but there has been no real change in his views.

<sup>2</sup>"The Task of Defining a Work of Art," *Philosophical Review*, 62 (1953), 58–78.

<sup>3</sup>At this point I am using the expression "the artworld" in a loose and informal way. As the analysis proceeds, the expression will come to have a more specific meaning.

<sup>4</sup>"Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 2 (1965), 219–228.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," p. 33.

<sup>7</sup>David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1888), p. 467.

<sup>8</sup>(Ithaca, 1960), p. 182 ff.

<sup>9</sup>(Ithaca, 1974).

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>This analysis was suggested to me by some of Colin Lyas' remarks on a somewhat similar topic in his "Danto and Dickie on Art," in *Culture and Art*, Lars Aagaard-Mogensen, ed. (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1976), p. 170.

<sup>12</sup>I want to thank Peter Kivy for calling my attention to this point of anthropological usage.

### Chapter IV

"Is Art Essentially Institutional?" in *Culture and Art*, Lars Aagaard-Mogensen, ed. (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1976), pp. 194–209.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>In giving these examples of types and tokens I am not attempting to correlate the particular types and tokens in the two lists of examples. I am not, for example, saying that General Motors is the token of which tool-making is the type.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>5</sup>Jeffrey Wieand, "Can There Be an Institutional Theory of Art?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 39 (1981), pp. 409–417.

<sup>6</sup>I elaborate this point at greater length later in this chapter.

<sup>7</sup>In *Culture and Art*, *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup>*Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), p. 40.

<sup>18</sup>*Art and the Aesthetic*, pp. 173–181. In this discussion of the conventions and rules which govern the presentation of artworks, I distinguished between what I called “the primary convention” and “the secondary conventions.” I still want to distinguish between two things here, but I now think what I called “the primary convention” is not in fact a convention; consequently, what I called “the secondary conventions,” which are conventions, do not need to be designated as secondary. I shall discuss this whole matter in the next chapter.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 104–106.

<sup>20</sup>I am not claiming that a necessary condition as such invariably entails a rule. The relevant kind of necessary condition has to be a condition of something the occurrence of which could involve rule-following. For example, there are certain necessary conditions for making sulphuric acid, but none of these conditions entails a rule—producing an acid is a matter of following a physical procedure. On the other hand, the necessary conditions of promising constitute the rules of promising. The difference here is between operating with physical laws and observing conventions.

<sup>21</sup>It is this rule that Dadaists such as Duchamp play around with, seeing how close they can come to breaking it and still make a work of art.

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup>*Art and the Aesthetic* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>See David Lewis' *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 213 for a detailed analysis of convention.

<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>*The Philosophical Review*, January 1977, p. 98. I have restated Walton's observation somewhat so that it applies to my new version of the institutional theory as well as the old.

<sup>7</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup>My idea of such an ideal derives from a suggestion in a seminar paper by Kendall D'Andrade.

<sup>11</sup>One reader of an early version of the manuscript of this book asked if I would be willing to consider the possibility of a self-contradictory account of art, since I am so willing to consider a circular account. I hope it will become clear that circularity is not necessarily the logical fault that self-contradiction is.

<sup>12</sup>*In Culture and Art* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1976), p. 209.

<sup>13</sup>*Loc. cit.*

## Chapter VI

<sup>1</sup>“Aesthetic Concepts,” in Joseph Margolis' (ed.) *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (New York, 1962), pp. 63–87.

<sup>2</sup>“Does Aesthetics Have Anything to do with Art?” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Summer 1978, pp. 429–440.

<sup>3</sup>Schultz, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>4</sup>"The Possibility of Art: Remarks on a Proposal by Dickie," *Philosophical Review*, January 1973, pp. 69-82.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 40-1.

<sup>7</sup>Schultz, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

<sup>8</sup>"Appreciation, the Artworld, and the Aesthetic," in *Culture and Art*, Lars Aagaard-Mogensen, ed. (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1976), pp. 118-130.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 126-7. Iseminger has apparently confused the adjective "appreciable" with the adjective "appreciatable." I take it that he means the latter in this quotation.

<sup>15</sup>Robert McGregor, "Art and the Aesthetic," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Summer 1974, pp. 549-559. Carolyn Korsmeyer, "On Distinguishing 'Aesthetic' from 'Artistic'," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 1977, pp. 45-57.

<sup>16</sup>For a penetrating discussion of McGregor's second sense of "aesthetic," see Robert Schultz, "Does Aesthetics Have Anything to do with Art?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Summer 1978, p. 430.

<sup>17</sup>*American Philosophical Quarterly*, January 1964, pp. 56-65. A more recent version of these arguments occurs in *Art and the Aesthetic*, pp. 113-134.

<sup>18</sup>McGregor, p. 555.

<sup>19</sup>In general, my criticism of McGregor follows the line worked out in Schultz's article, *Op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup>"Aesthetic Concepts," in Joseph Margolis' (ed.) *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (New York, 1962), p. 64.

<sup>21</sup>Korsmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 54. Korsmeyer's characterization of aesthetic perception is somewhat less careful than McGregor's in that her remarks seem to presuppose different kinds of attention. I shall not take up this point, as it has already been dealt with.

<sup>22</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>23</sup>Colin Lyas, "Aesthetic and Personal Qualities," *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1971-72, pp. 171-193.

<sup>24</sup>See *Art and the Aesthetic* pages 147-173 for a detailed discussion of Beardsley's view.

<sup>25</sup>See *Art and the Aesthetic* pages 90-146 for a detailed discussion of these theorists' views.



## CREDITS

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